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AMERICAN ORIENTAL SERIES

VOLUME 17

STATESMAN, PATRIOT, AND GENERAL
IN ANCIENT CHINA

AMERICAN ORIENTAL SERIES

VOLUME 17

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CHING K'O'S ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE THE KING OF CH'IN (See pp. 34-35).

Stone relief from the Wu Liang Tomb, Shantung (about A. D. 150). Ching K'o, on the left, with outstretched arms and hair standing on end with fury, has been seized by another man (perhaps the doctor Hsia Wu ch'u). He has just hurled his dagger at the King of Ch'in so fiercely that its tassel flies out almost horizontally and it completely pierces an intervening pillar. To the right stands the King of Ch'in (the later First Emperor of Ch'in), holding aloft a jade disk as insignia of authority. Part of his sleeve, torn off in the struggle, lies on the floor. Below the pillar is the box containing the head of General Fan Yu-ch'ü. Ch'in Wu-yang, Ching K'o's assistant, lies terror stricken on the floor. A soldier with sword and shield rushes in from the far right.

(From Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale*. Plate LX.)

STATESMAN, PATRIOT, AND GENERAL IN ANCIENT CHINA

Three *Shih Chi* Biographies of the Ch'in Dynasty
(255-206 B. C.)

TRANSLATED AND DISCUSSED

BY

DERK BODDE

University of Pennsylvania

AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

1940

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Societies has assisted in the publication
of this volume*

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*To the Chinese scholars of to-day who,
despite bomb and shell,
still carry on*

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The Master said: "To lead an uninstructed people to war, is to throw them away" (*Analects*, XIII, 30).

PREFACE

In an earlier work entitled *China's First Unifier*,¹ I have tried to trace in some detail the political, social, economic, and philosophic movement which enabled the state of Ch'in, occupying what are now the province of Kansu and Shensi in western China, first to overthrow the moribund Chou dynasty in 256 B. C., and then, in 221 B. C., to conquer the last opposing feudal state, abolish feudalism, and for the first time in history unite China into a single great empire.

Because, however, this study centered chiefly around the life and achievements of Li Ssü (280?-208 B. C.), the leading statesman of the Ch'in dynasty, certain points were left open, into which there was no opportunity to enter in detail. The present little book, therefore, is intended to fill up some of these gaps.

For our knowledge of the Ch'in dynasty, we are dependent to a large extent on the *Shih Chi* (Historical Records), the first of the great Chinese dynastic histories, work on which was commenced by Ssü-ma T'an (died 110 B. C.) and brought to completion by his son, Ssü-ma Ch'ien (145-c. 86 B. C.). An important part of my *China's First Unifier* consisted of the translation of the biography of Li Ssü, which forms the eighty-seventh chapter of the *Shih Chi*; and a similar course has been followed in the present volume through the translation of the biographies of three other men who were important figures during the Ch'in dynasty.

The first of these is Lü Pu-wei 呂不韋 (died 235 B. C.), who from 250 to 237 was the outstanding statesman in Ch'in, and whose biography occupies the eighty-fifth chapter of the *Shih Chi*. The second is Ching K'ao 荊軻, who in 227 B. C. made a vain but heroic attempt to assassinate the First Sovereign Emperor of Ch'in.² His biography occupies the second half of the eighty-sixth chapter of the *Shih Chi*, the first half of which is devoted to the lives of four other noted political assassins of earlier periods. The third is Meng T'ien 蒙恬 (died 210 B. C.), who

¹ *China's First Unifier, a study of the Ch'in dynasty as seen in the life of Li Ssü 李斯* (280?-208 B. C.). Sinica Leidensia Series, vol. 3, Leiden, 1938.

² Ch'in Shih-huang-ti. Actually he only assumed this title upon the final conquest of China in 221 B. C. In *China's First Unifier* the usual custom was followed of calling him by his Chinese title of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti, or simply Ch'in Shih-huang. In the present work, however, at the suggestion of Professor H. H. Dubs, this title has everywhere been translated either as the First Sovereign Emperor of Ch'in or more simply as the First Emperor.

was the most famous of the generals under the First Emperor of Ch'in, and was chiefly renowned as the builder of the Great Wall. His biography (which also contains a good deal about his younger brother, Meng I) occupies the eighty-eighth chapter of the *Shih Chi*.

These three biographies, together with that of Li Ssü, thus form a solid block in the *Shih Chi* (chs. 85-88), and the men they portray are those who were actually the most important personalities during the time of the First Emperor of Ch'in, beginning from the commencement of his reign in 246 B. C., until his death in 210, which was speedily followed by rebellion, the collapse of the Ch'in dynasty, and its replacement by that of Han (206 B. C.-A. D. 220).

In the case of the biography of Li Ssü, the translation of the biography itself was followed by a textual and historical study in which an attempt was made to determine its reliability and the sources of its materials.^a The present volume adopts the same plan, so that the translation of each biography is followed by a discussion, into which much material has been placed which would otherwise have unnecessarily overburdened the notes of the text.

The edition of the *Shih Chi* which has been used for these translations is the same as that employed for *China's First Unifier*: the photolithie edition published by the Chung Hua Book Co. of Shanghai in 1923. It has been checked, however, against a number of other editions.

In the index at the back of this book, the names will be found, together with their Chinese characters, of all persons, places, and titles of books mentioned in the text proper of the three biographies. It was felt that the usefulness of this index would be increased if it were limited to being an index of the *Shih Chi* texts alone. Therefore it does not include the names which occur elsewhere in the discussions of these texts, or in the notes themselves. These latter names are in any case very often the same as those in the text proper, but if they are new ones, their Chinese characters are usually given at the place in the book where they first occur, save in the cases of names that are either so familiar (such as those of dynasties), or so unimportant, that their Chinese characters are no longer essential.

A word may be added concerning the use of parentheses and of square brackets in the translations. Parentheses serve to indicate words or phrases which do not occur in the original text, but have been added by the translator for the sake of clarity. Square brackets serve to indicate passages which either seem to have been interpolated from some other source, or have been directly copied from an earlier known source. In

^a See *China's First Unifier*, ch. 4.

the case of the biography of Ching K'ò, the latter usage may seem a little puzzling to the reader, because the earlier text which has there been utilized is such a lengthy one that in some cases the opening and closing brackets of a single copied passage are several pages apart from each other.

I am deeply grateful to the American Council of Learned Societies, and especially to its secretary, Mr. Mortimer Graves, for providing a grant which made possible the publication of this book. To the editors of the *American Oriental Series* my heartiest thanks are due for their careful reading of the manuscript and the many suggestions they have offered. It is also a pleasure to record my obligation to Mr. Henri Vetch, of Peiping, for his readiness to undertake the sale and distribution of the book in China.

DERK BODDE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,
February 8, 1940.

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FRONTISPICE

Ching K'ö's Attempt to Assassinate the King of Ch'in

I

THE BIOGRAPHY OF LÜ PU-WEI

TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

1a Lü Pu-wei was a great merchant of Yang-ti.¹ During his travels he bought cheap and sold dear, so that his family accumulated thousands of (catties of) gold.²

In the fortieth year of King Chao of Ch'in (267 B. C.), the Crown Prince (of Ch'in) died. In his forty-second year (265), he established his second son, the Prince of An-kuo, as Crown Prince.

The Prince of An-kuo had more than twenty sons. He had a concubine whom he deeply loved, and whom he established as his proper wife. Her title was Lady Hua-yang. Lady Hua-yang had no children.

(One of) the secondary sons of the Prince of An-kuo was named Tzū-ch'ü. The mother of Tzū-ch'ü was the concubine Hsia. She was not loved (by the Prince of An-kuo). (Hence) Tzū-ch'ü was (sent) to Chao as a Ch'in hostage.³

Ch'in had several times attacked Chao, (and so the people of) Chao

¹ In what is now Yu 禹 hsien, Honan, about 125 li southwest of Chengchow, the point of junction of the Peiping-Hankow and Lunghai railroads.

² H. H. Dubs, in his translation of *The History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Baltimore, 1938), vol. I, p. 175, note 2, quotes commentators who say that actual gold is intended only when the term *huang chin* 黃金 (yellow gold) is used; whereas the word *chin* 金 (gold), when used by itself, means simply "(the equivalent of) X catties of gold." According to this interpretation, the present passage should be translated as "his family accumulated (the equivalent of) thousands of (catties of) gold." This is a clumsy expression, however, and therefore is not used here. Moreover, Professor Dubs does not explain what it was that served as the equivalent for the gold. The word *chin* is not only used in Chinese to mean gold itself, but is also employed in a wider sense simply as a designation for metal in general. Because of this fact, the hypothesis seems possible that in addition to coins made out of actual gold (*huang chin*), the Chinese of this period also made use of a different coinage which they called *chin*, made out of some metal other than gold. This hypothesis is probable in view of the relative scarcity of gold resources in China, and would explain the frequency with which the term *chin* appears in these texts, in comparison with the term *huang chin*. But further research, aided by archaeology, might well throw more light on this problem.

³ It was the common custom in the feudal China of that time for lesser sons in the various royal families to be sent to the courts of other states as hostages as a guarantee against interstate treachery.

did not treat Tzū-ch'ü with much courtesy. [Tzū-ch'ü and the (other) secondary sons of princes of the House of Ch'in were hostages among the feudal lords.] ⁴ The carriage in which he rode and his funds ⁵ for expenses were inadequate; his living quarters were uncomfortable and did not meet his needs.

When Lü Pu-wei was (once) doing some business at Han-tan,⁶ he saw and pitied him, and said: "Here is some rare merchandise that may be stored up." He then went to call on Tzū-ch'ü and said to him: "I am one able to enlarge your gate."⁷ Tzū-ch'ü smiled and replied: "Better enlarge your own gate, sir, and then enlarge mine."

Lü Pu-wei said: "You do not understand. My gate depends on your gate for enlargement." Tzū-ch'ü knew in his mind what was meant, and, drawing him near, he sat down with him and engaged in deep conversation.

Lü Pu-wei said: "The King of Ch'in is old and the Prince of An-kuo has become Crown Prince. I have heard that the Prince of An-kuo loves Lady Hua-yang. Lady Hua-yang is childless, (but) it is only she who can appoint a successor. At present you have more than twenty elder and younger brothers, and moreover hold but a middle position among them.⁸ You have not received much favor, and for a long time have been a hostage among the feudal lords. When the great King dies, the Prince of An-kuo will become King, and then you will have no chance to compete with your elder and other brothers, who are ever before him, for the position of Crown Prince."

Tzū-ch'ü said: "What, then, is to be done about this?"

Lü Pu-wei replied: "You are poor and are a stranger here. You have nothing with which to offer presents to your relatives and to consolidate (for yourself a position in Chao) as a pensioner. Although I am poor, I request to travel westward on your behalf with one thousand (catties of) gold, where I shall induce the Prince of An-kuo and Lady Hua-yang to establish you as their successor."

Tzū-ch'ü then bowed his head and said: "Should it go, sir, as you plan, I beg to divide the state of Ch'in and share it with you."

Lü Pu-wei then gave Tzū-ch'ü five hundred (catties of) gold as funds for his expenses and to consolidate (his position) as a pensioner (in

⁴ This sentence, being a repetition of what has just been said, is almost surely an interpolation.

⁵ According to the commentator, Ssü-ma Cheng 司馬貞 (first half of 8th century A. D.), 進 is here equivalent to 財.

⁶ The capital of the state of Chao, ten *li* southwest of the present Han-tan hsien in Hopei.

⁷ I. e., to advance you in the world.

⁸ I. e., are neither the eldest nor the youngest.

Chao); with another five hundred (catties of) gold he himself bought rare objects and beautiful trinkets for making presents, and travelled westward to Ch'in. There he sought an interview with the elder sister of Lady Hua-yang, and (through her) offered all his things to Lady Hua-yang. In this way he was able to speak about the worthiness and wisdom of Tzū-ch'ū, and (to point out) that he had made himself the pensioner of feudal lords in all parts of the world. He said frequently that "(Tzū-)ch'ū regards Her Ladyship as Heaven, and day and night thinks tearfully of the Crown Prince and of Her Ladyship."

Her Ladyship, (on hearing of this), was greatly pleased. In this way Lü Pu-wei induced her elder sister to say to Her Ladyship:

"When a woman serves a man with her beauty, I have heard that as her beauty fades, his love (likewise) slackens. At present Your Ladyship serves the Crown Prince, who deeply loves you, though you are without children. (Why) at this time do you not promptly attach to yourself one of the royal princes who is worthy and filial, establish him as the successor, and make him your son? ⁹ During your lifetime you will be deeply honored, and for (even) a century afterward, he whom you have made your son will never lose his power as king.

"This is known as ten thousand generations of benefit resulting from a single word. If, while you are beautiful, you do not plant the root (for future security), after your beauty has faded and his love has relaxed, though you should wish to utter a single word, will it still be possible? ¹⁰ Now Tzū-ch'ū is virtuous, and he himself realizes that as a secondary son his rank does not permit him to be the successor. His mother, moreover, has not received favor and so has attached herself to Your Ladyship. If at the present time you were really to make him the successor, you would enjoy favor in Ch'in to the end of your life."

Lady Hua-yang agreed with this, and when the Crown Prince was at leisure and was taking his ease, she told him that Tzū-ch'ū, who was a hostage in Chao, was of extremely good character, and that persons travelling to and fro all acclaimed and praised him. Then with tears she said: "I, your concubine, have had the good fortune to occupy your harem, but unfortunately I have had no children. I should like to have Tzū-ch'ū made the successor, and let him be entrusted to my care."

The Prince of An-kuo granted her request. He then gave to Her Ladyship an engraved jade tablet as a bond that he (Tzū-ch'ū) should be made the successor. Upon this, the Prince of An-kuo and his wife sent valuable presents to Tzū-ch'ū, and requested Lü Pu-wei to be his

⁹ The text seems to be corrupt here. Only by adding a word like *何* (why?) at the beginning of the sentence, do the words make sense.

¹⁰ I. e., will it still have effect?

guardian. In this way the fame of Tzū-ch'ü became widespread among the feudal lords.

Among the courtesans of Han-tan, Lü Pu-wei had taken for himself one who was extremely beautiful and an excellent dancer. He lived with her, and knew that she was pregnant. When Tzū-ch'ü was once drinking in company with (Lü) Pu-wei, he saw and liked her. He therefore arose to offer (a toast for) long life, and (took this occasion) to ask that he might have her. Lü Pu-wei was angry, but he reflected that his activities on Tzū-ch'ü's behalf had already ruined his family, and he wished in this way to hook something rare.¹¹ So he gave his concubine to him. The concubine kept to herself the fact that she was pregnant, and at the expiration of a great period she bore a son, Cheng.¹² Tzū-ch'ü then established his concubine to be his proper wife.

In the fiftieth year of King Chao of Ch'ü (257 B. C.), Wang Ch'ü was sent to lay siege to Han-tan with vigor.¹³ (The state of) Chao wished to kill Tzū-ch'ü. But Tzū-ch'ü and Lü Pu-wei consulted together, and sent six hundred catties of gold as a present to their keeper. Thus they gained their escape and fled to the Ch'in army, from which they made their return (to Ch'in). (The state of) Chao wished to kill the wife of Tzū-ch'ü. But the lady of Tzū-ch'ü, being a woman of a wealthy Chao family, succeeded in having herself hidden, so that in this way both mother and child finally managed to save their lives.

In the fifty-sixth year of his reign (251 B. C.), King Chao of Ch'in died. The Crown Prince, Prince of An-kuo, was established as King; Lady Hua-yang became Queen; and Tzū-ch'ü became Crown Prince. (The state of) Chao also sent the Lady of Tzū-ch'ü, and her son, Cheng, back to Ch'in.

¹¹ This phrase refers to Lü Pu-wei's exclamation when he first saw Tzū-ch'ü (p. 2): "Here is some rare merchandise that may be stored up."

¹² The curious expression, "great period" (*ta ch'ü* 大期), is explained by Hsi Kuang 徐廣 (A. D. 352-425) as meaning twelve months. According to this passage, Prince Cheng, who later became the famed First Emperor of Ch'in, and who unified feudal China in 221 B. C., was really the natural son of Lü Pu-wei. The authenticity of this story will be discussed in the discussion on the biography.

Prince Cheng's name is given as *cheng* 政 (to govern) both here and in the beginning of the *Shih Chi*'s sixth chapter. For the latter, see the translation of Chavannes, *Les mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien* (hereafter referred to as *Mém. hist.*), Paris, 1895-1905, vol. II, p. 100. But under that entry Hsi Kuang remarks that there is one text reading *cheng* 正 (meaning "upright" or "correct"), and there is little doubt that this is the proper reading, as Prince Cheng probably gained his name from the fact that he was born in the first month of the year, which in China is always called the *cheng* 正 (correct) month. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 100, note 2.

¹³ Wang Ch'ü was a Ch'in general who died in 244.

When the King of Ch'in had reigned one year, he died, and was given the posthumous title of King Hsiao-wen. The Crown Prince, Tzū-ch'ü, took his place and became King Chuang-hsiang. Queen Hua-yang, who had mothered him, became Queen-dowager Hua-yang. His real mother, the concubine Hsia, was honored by being made Queen-dowager Hsia.

In his first year (250 B. C.), King Chuang-hsiang made Lü Pu-wei his Grand Councillor.¹⁴ He was enfeoffed as Marquis of Wen-hsin, and given the revenues from one hundred thousand households at Lo-yang in Ho-nan.¹⁵

- 2a When King Chuang-hsiang had been on the throne three years, he died, and the Crown Prince, Cheng, was established as King.¹⁶ He honored Lü Pu-wei by making him Councillor of State, and gave him the title of "Second Father."¹⁷

While the King of Ch'in was still young,¹⁸ the Queen-dowager time after time had secret sexual relations with Lü Pu-wei.¹⁹

The servitors belonging to (Lü) Pu-wei's household amounted to ten thousand men. At that time in the state of Wei there was the Lord of Hsin-ling, in Ch'ü there was the Lord of Ch'un-shen, in Chao there was

¹⁴ *Ch'eng hsiang* 丞相, the highest position in the state below that of the King himself.

¹⁵ The region surrounding the present city of Loyang in Honan, which had long been the capital of the ruling dynasty of Chou, until this dynasty was wiped out by the state of Ch'ü in 256 B. C.

¹⁶ Actually, it was in the fourth year of his reign that King Chuang-hsiang died in 247. The confusion is explained by the fact that his predecessor, King Hsiao-wen, had died only a few days after he assumed the rule at the very beginning of the year 250. For this reason, the reign of King Chuang-hsiang was counted as beginning in the same year of 250, whereas according to the usual Chinese custom, the first year of his reign should have been dated only from the following year, 249. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 96, note 3. Thus though King Chuang-hsiang actually died in the fourth year of his reign, yet according to the usual method of dating (which would make his reign begin only in 249), he reigned but three years.

Following the same method of reckoning, the reign of King Cheng began officially only in 246. In 221 he conquered the last of the feudal states opposing Ch'in and unified China into a single empire. At the same time he assumed the title by which he is known to history, Shih-huang-ti, meaning "First Sovereign Emperor."

¹⁷ *Chung fu* 仲父. This title should not be taken to indicate that the First Emperor realized that Lü Pu-wei was his actual father. He was probably merely following the precedent established by King Chao-hsiang (306-251), who had conferred on the noted Ch'in general, Fan Sui 范雎, the title of *shu fu* 叔父, which has the same meaning.

¹⁸ He was only thirteen at the time he began to reign in 246, having been born in 259. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 100.

¹⁹ It will be remembered that she had originally been Lü Pu-wei's concubine.

the Lord of P'ing-yüan, and in Ch'í there was the Lord of Meng-ch'ang.²⁰ All of them had been members of the lower gentry,²¹ and they delighted in having (about them) visiting (scholars), by means of whom they could compete with each other (in arguments).

Lü Pu-wei was ashamed that Ch'in, with all its power, was still not equal (to these states in scholarship); so he also summoned scholars to come, and entertained them lavishly, until he had three thousand visiting (scholars) whom he supported.²² At this time among (the entourage of) the feudal lords there were many disputing scholars, such as the followers of Hsün Ch'ing,²³ who wrote books which were spread through the world. Lü Pu-wei now had all his guests record what they had learned, and he collected their discussions to form eight "observations," six "discussions," and twelve "records," (totaling) more than 200,000 words. He maintained that all matters pertaining to Heaven, Earth, the ten thousand things (in the universe), and to antiquity and the present, were comprised (in this work). He entitled it *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü*.²⁴ This was displayed at the gate of the market-place of Hsien-yang;²⁵ one thousand (catties of) gold were suspended above it; and invitation was issued to the travelling scholars and visitors of the feudal lords, that anyone among them who could add or subtract one word from it, would be given the thousand (catties of) gold.

²⁰ These men were all noted statesmen and generals. But as pointed out by Chang Shou-chieh 張守節, in his commentary (dated A.D. 787), the Lord of P'ing-yüan had already died some years before, in 252; the Lord of Hsin-ling in 243; the Lord of Ch'un-shen in 238; and the Lord of Meng-ch'ang long before, sometime after the year 283. Thus the Lord of Ch'un-shen was probably the only one still living at this time.

²¹ *Hsia shih* 下士

²² Ch'in was a state notoriously lacking in culture. See *China's First Unifier*, ch. 1.

²³ The famous Confucian philosopher, Hsün Tzu.

²⁴ This is the famous *Lü-shih Ch'un Ch'iu* 呂氏春秋, one of the most important philosophical works to come down to us from that period, containing as it does writings representing all schools of thought. It has been translated into German by Richard Wilhelm, *Frühling und Herbst des Lü Bu We* (Jena, 1928).

The "observations" (*lan* 覽), "discussions" (*lun* 論), and "records" (*ohi* 紀) are titles of different sections of the work. According to the introduction by its commentator, Kao Yu 高誘 (fl. A.D. 205-212), the work actually contains a total of 173,054 characters. The date of the compilation of the book is usually supposed to have been 239 B.C., but Ch'ien Mu 錢穆, in his *Hsien-Ch'in Ch'u-tzu Hsi-nien* 先秦諸子繫年 (A Linked Chronology of the Pre-Ch'in Philosophers), sect. 159 (Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1936), after detailed study, comes to the conclusion that the correct date should be 240 B.C.

²⁵ The capital of Ch'in, near the present city of Sian, Shensi.

While the First Emperor was growing up, the licentiousness of the Queen-dowager did not cease. Lü Pu-wei feared it might be discovered and that disaster would befall himself, so he secretly sought out a man named Lao Ai, who had a tremendous penis, and made him his retainer. At times he would indulge in some wild music, and have (Lao) Ai move about (in time with it), with his penis filling up (the hole of) a wheel made of *t'ung* wood.²⁶ He caused the Queen-dowager to hear of this, in order to entice her. The Queen-dowager heard of it, and actually wished secretly to have him. Lü Pu-wei thereupon introduced Lao Ai, and had someone falsely accuse him of a crime deserving castration. At the same time (Lü) Pu-wei secretly told the Queen-dowager that if she could have (Lao Ai) falsely castrated, then he could be obtained to serve within (the women's quarters). At this, the Queen-dowager secretly gave heavy bribes to the official in charge of castration, to have him (i. e., Lao Ai) falsely condemned, pluck off his beard and eyebrows, and make him a eunuch. In this way he came to enter the service of the Queen-dowager.

The Queen-dowager secretly had intercourse with him and loved him passionately, so that she became pregnant. The Queen-dowager feared that people would know about this, and made a false divination, (saying) that she must go into retirement for a time. She moved from the palace and went to live at Yung.²⁷ Lao Ai constantly attended her and was given very rich presents. All affairs were decided by Lao Ai, and in his household there were several thousand servitors, while more than a thousand visitors (came), seeking to be made eunuchs and to become Lao Ai's followers.

[In the seventh year of the First Emperor (240 B. C.), the mother of King Chuang-hsiang, the Queen-dowager Hsia, died. The Queen of King Hsiao-wen, who was Queen-dowager Hua-yang, had been buried together with King Hsiao-wen at Shou-ling.²⁸ King Chuang-hsiang, the son of Queen-dowager Hsia, was buried at Chih-yang.²⁹ Therefore Queen-dowager Hsia was buried separately east of Tu.³⁰ (Before she died) she said: "To the east I shall overlook my son. To the west I shall overlook my husband. One hundred years from now, there will be beside me a city of ten thousand families."]³¹

²⁶ 桐, the *Elaeococca*.

²⁷ South of the present Feng-hsiang 鳳翔 hsien in Shensi, not far north of the Wei river.

²⁸ In Ch'ang-an 長安 hsien in Shensi, very near the Ch'in capital, Hsien-yang

²⁹ In the eastern part of the same hsien.

³⁰ In the southeast of the same hsien.

³¹ This paragraph is very probably an interpolation, as it has no direct con-

In the ninth year of the First Emperor (238 B. C.), someone told him that Lao Ai was not a real eunuch; that he constantly engaged in private disorderly conduct with the Queen-dowager; that she had given birth to two children, both of whom she had concealed; and that he plotted with the Queen-dowager, saying: "Once the King has died, we shall make our children his successors."³²

Thereupon the King of Ch'in sent an official to regulate the matter, and thus he learned the entire truth. The affair involved the Councillor of State, Lü Pu-wei. In the ninth month, he (the King) exterminated Lao Ai (and his kindred) to the third degree,³³ executed the two children who had been born to the Queen-dowager, and then removed the Queen-dowager to Yung. He destroyed the houses of all of Lao Ai's retainers, and removed them (the retainers) to Shu.³⁴ The King wished to execute 2b the Councillor of State, but because he had done much of merit for the preceding King, and because his pensioners and disputing scholars, who travelled about as sophists, were numerous, the King did not allow the law to be applied.

In the tenth month of the tenth year (237 B. C.), the King of Ch'in removed from office both the Councillor of State, Lü Pu-wei, and a man of Ch'i, Mao Chiao, who had reproached the King of Ch'in.³⁵ The King of Ch'in then met the Queen-dowager at Yung and brought her back to Hsien-yang, while he sent the Marquis of Wen-hsin (i. e., Lü Pu-wei) to his feudal state at Ho-nan.

For more than a year the pensioners and envoys of the feudal lords, when they saw each other on the road, asked about the Marquis of

nection with the rest of the biography. Further evidence for this fact will be found in the discussion on the biography, p. 10. It is probably an elaboration of the simple statement of the death of Queen-dowager Hsia found in *Mém. hist.*, II, 106.

³² This same story is found in the *Shuo Yüan* 說苑 (*chüan* 9, p. 5b of the Ssu Pu Ts'ung K'an ed.), by Liu Hsiang 劉向 (79-8 B. C.), where it is somewhat embroidered on and contains the statement by Lao Ai that "I am the Emperor's false father."

³³ Parents, brothers, and wife and children, but the term is somewhat ambiguous. See J. J. L. Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang* (London, 1928), p. 279, note 2.

³⁴ A wild region in the present Szechuan, which had been conquered by Ch'in.

³⁵ Mao Chiao's remonstrance is mentioned in *Mém. hist.*, II, 112-113, where, however, no mention is made of Mao being punished. On the contrary, it is stated that the King of Ch'in was persuaded by Mao to pardon the Queen-dowager. This is confirmed by the *Shuo Yüan* (*chüan* 9, pp. 6a-8a), which states that following his remonstrance, Mao Chiao was made High Dignitary and was given the title of Second Father. Chavannes (*Mém. hist.*, II, 113, note 1) says that Mao Chiao was afterward executed by being boiled alive, but he gives no authority for this statement.

Wen-hsin. The King of Ch'in was afraid that they would foment a rebellion, so he sent the Marquis of Wen-hsin a letter which said: "Of what merit, sir, have you been to Ch'in? Yet Ch'in has given you a fief in Ho-nan, with a revenue of one hundred thousand households. What love, sir, have you borne for Ch'in? Yet you have been given the title of 'Second Father.' With your family and followers, remove yourself to Shu."

Lü Pu-wei, meditating to himself while he slowly travelled (to his place of exile), feared that he would be executed, so he drank poison and died.³⁶ Once Lü Pu-wei and Lao Ai, against whom the King of Ch'in's wrath had been accumulated, were both dead, all the retainers of Lao Ai who had moved to Shu were brought back.

In the nineteenth year of the First Emperor (228 B. C.), the Queen-dowager died and was given the posthumous title of Empress-dowager. She was buried together with King Chuang-hsiang at Chih-yang.³⁷

The Great Astrologer Duke says: ³⁸

"(Lü) Pu-wei and Lao Ai were ennobled with the title of Marquis of Wen-hsin.³⁹ Before the King of Ch'in's interrogations of those about him had yet begun, (Lao) Ai learned of the accusations made by people against him. When the King went to the suburb of Yung, (Lao) Ai, fearing that disaster would come, plotted with his party to counterfeit the seal of the Queen-dowager and to send out soldiers to overthrow the Ch'i-nien palace.⁴⁰ Magistrates were dispatched to attack (Lao) Ai, and he fled, vanquished and in disorder. He was pursued and beheaded at Hao-chih,⁴¹ after which his family was exterminated. From this event, Lü Pu-wei (also) met his downfall. Does not Confucius' definition of 'the man of (false) repute' ⁴² apply to this fellow Lü?" ⁴³

³⁶ According to *Mém. hist.*, II, 116, this event happened in 235 B. C.

³⁷ The character *chih* 茝 used here in the name Chih-yang is interchangeable with the character *chih* 芷 which occurs in the same name on p. 7.

³⁸ *T'ai shih kung* 太史公, the official title held by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, author of the *Shih Chi*.

³⁹ This is, of course, a mistake, for only Lü Pu-wei was ennobled with this title. Something seems to have dropped out of the text, for we know from *Mém. hist.*, II, 108, that in the year 239 Lao Ai was ennobled as Marquis of Ch'ang-hsin 長信侯.

⁴⁰ An old palace south of Feng-hsiang 鳳翔 hsien in Shensi. The name means "palace where one prays for (long) years."

⁴¹ Ten li east of the present Ch'ien 乾 hsien in Shensi.

⁴² *Wen ohe* 聞者.

⁴³ See the *Lun Yü* (Confucian Analects), XII, 20: "As to the man of (false) repute, he assumes an appearance of virtue which his actions belie, and his self-assurance knows never a misgiving. Thus he ensures his repute in his country, as he does in his clan."

DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT

In its uncompromising realism, this biography should satisfy the most avid seeker for scandal and court intrigue. Certainly the unsavouriness of its details surpasses even that to be found in the lives of the other great statesmen of Ch'in, Shang Yang and Li Ssü.

This biography is of great interest from another point of view, however, which is the fact that its "hero" was probably the first "capitalist" in Chinese history to attain to a position of really national prominence. In the feudalistic China of the early days of the Chou dynasty, the position of the merchant class was a very humble one, and was hedged in by all kinds of restrictions. But with the gradual disintegration of feudal society during the centuries immediately preceding the Ch'in dynasty, new human elements came to the fore, and among them members of the once despised merchant class.¹ The biographies of several such merchants have been preserved for us in the one hundred twenty-ninth chapter of the *Shih Chi*; yet in none of them can the change of the old social order be illustrated more brilliantly than in the life of Lü Pu-wei, a man who, though originally a merchant, succeeded in becoming the mightiest man of Ch'in, then the most powerful state in China.

The history of these troubled times provides many examples of the meteoric rise in this way of men of humble origin. Li Ssü, for example, several times speaks of himself as a "commoner";² yet in 237, the same year when Lü Pu-wei lost his power, he succeeded in replacing him as the outstanding statesman in Ch'in, a position which he held indisputably until his death in 208. All such statesmen, however, even though they were originally "commoners," were at the same time men of education. Thus Li Ssü had studied under the Confucian philosopher, Hsün Tzü, who was the greatest scholar of the time; and the speeches and throne memorials which are preserved in Li Ssü's biography indicate him as undoubtedly the leading literary man under the Ch'in First Emperor.

Lü Pu-wei, on the other hand, was a merchant, and as such it is exceedingly doubtful whether he ever received more than a very elementary education. If he had, his biography certainly gives no indication of the fact. It portrays him only as a clever but completely unscrupulous man, who pushed his way upward by means of money and his own native shrewdness, rather than through any literary graces. It

¹ See Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1, English translation of Derk Bodde (Peiping, 1937), pp. 12-13.

² *Pu i* 布衣. See *China's First Unifier*, p. 56.

completely lacks the brilliantly written memorials which occupy such a conspicuous place in Li Ssü's biography, and some of which, on grounds of pure style, have since become included in Chinese anthologies of fine literature.

Even the part played by Lü Pu-wei in the compilation of the important philosophical work, *Lü-shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, proves nothing as to his own literary tastes. At the present day we are still not unfamiliar with the activities of the crude, uncultivated, selfmade man, who becomes a patron of the arts chiefly in order that he may gain the plaudits of the *élite*. Lü Pu-wei's intense vanity and pride are indicated not only by the way in which he attached his own name to the *Lü-shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, of which he probably did not write a word, but by his absurd offer of a thousand catties of gold to anyone who could improve upon it. Naturally no one was so foolhardy as to risk his displeasure by attempting to claim the prize!

Lü Pu-wei's association with this work is in another way also significant, because it indicates that he, unlike Shang Yang, Li Ssü, and other Ch'in statesmen, was probably not a follower of the Legalist school of thought. For the Legalists, even though they were educated men themselves, were opposed to education for others, which they said only made the people more difficult to govern. And above all, they objected to the travelling scholars, who by their conflicting social theories, tended to undermine the authority of the government. The logical culmination of such Legalist ideas was reached in Li Ssü's famous Burning of the Books in 213 B. C.

At the same time Lü Pu-wei's very lack of education may have sufficed to exclude him from the Legalist school, which had a rather highly developed system of dialectic. Still another equally decisive factor may have been the fact that Lü Pu-wei was a merchant, and hence unacceptable to the Legalists; for the latter were strong believers in the development of agriculture, which they considered to be the basis of a country's wealth. At the same time they were hostile to commerce, which they regarded as a parasitical and non-productive occupation, and we know that both before and after Lü Pu-wei's time, the state of Ch'in, under Legalist influence, had taken steps to restrict commercial activities.*

So much for Lü Pu-wei's personal character and significance. His biography, unfortunately, is filled with problems that make it one of the most puzzling chapters in the *Shih Chi*, and may best be attacked by dividing it into two parts. The first part ends with Lü Pu-wei's ap-

* See *China's First Unifier*, p. 171.

pointment as Grand Councillor in Ch'in in the year 250 (biography, p. 5), and contains the extraordinary story according to which the First Emperor was Lü Pu-wei's natural son. The second centers chiefly around Lü Pu-wei's continued relations with the First Emperor's mother (his own former concubine), and her intrigue with Lao Ai.

Before studying these two halves of the biography, it may be well, for the sake of clarity, to make a brief résumé of its main facts. Chronologically arranged, they are as follows:

- 267 B. C.: Death of the Crown Prince of Ch'in.
- 265: Prince of An-kuo made Crown Prince of Ch'in. (Later becomes King Hsiao-wen, and reigns one year only, in 250.)
- 265-259: At some time during this period, Lü Pu-wei, a great merchant of Yang-ti (in Honan), meets Tzū-ch'ü (the later King Chuang-hsiang of Ch'in, 250-247) at Han-tan, the capital of Chao. Tzū-ch'ü is a secondary son of Prince of An-kuo, and has been sent as a hostage for Ch'in to Chao. Lü Pu-wei gives him money, and then goes to Ch'in, where he speaks to Lady Huiyang, childless wife of Prince of An-kuo, and persuades her to adopt Tzū-ch'ü as her son.
- 259: Shortly before this year, Tzū-ch'ü receives from Lü Pu-wei the latter's concubine, not knowing that she is already pregnant. In 259, at the end of a "great period" (explained by the commentator as meaning twelve months), she gives birth to a boy, Cheng (who later becomes the First Emperor of Ch'in, 246-210).
- 257: Chao capital, Han-tan, is besieged by the Ch'in general, Wang Ch'ü. Tzū-ch'ü, in danger of his life, manages to escape with Lü Pu-wei. His wife (Lü Pu-wei's former concubine) also saves herself and her son, Cheng, by going into hiding.
- 251: Death of King Chao of Ch'in, who is followed by Prince of An-kuo (King Hsiao-wen). Tzū-ch'ü is made Crown Prince. King Hsiao-wen dies after one year.
- 250: Tzū-ch'ü becomes King Chuang-hsiang (250-247), and makes Lü Pu-wei his Grand Councillor, enfeoffing him as Marquis of Wen-hsin.
- 246: Following the death of King Chuang-hsiang (Tzū-ch'ü), Prince Cheng (supposedly the son of Tzū-ch'ü; actually the son of Lü Pu-wei) becomes King of Ch'in. (In 221 he unifies feudal China into one empire and assumes the title of First Sovereign Emperor; dies in 210.) Lü Pu-wei continues during the early years of the reign to have sexual relations with the King's mother (Lü Pu-wei's former concubine).

- 240: *Lü-shih Ch'un Ch'iu* compiled under Lü Pu-wei's direction probably during this year. Death of the mother of Tzū-ch'u (King Chuang-hsiang) in this same year. At about this time, or perhaps earlier, Lü Pu-wei introduces a licentious man, Lao Ai, to King's mother, who through him bears two children.
- 238: The First Emperor discovers the relationship between his mother and Lao Ai. In the ninth month, Lao Ai and his kindred are executed.
- 237: In the tenth month, Lü Pu-wei loses his office and is sent in disgrace to his feudal state in Honan. The First Emperor pardons his mother.
- 235: Lü Pu-wei is exiled to Szechuan and commits suicide by drinking poison while on the way.
- 228: Death of the First Emperor's mother.

The study of the first half of the biography is aided by the fact that its narrative is paralleled by an account contained in the *Chan Kuo Ts'e* (Plots of the Warring States);⁴ but it is confused by the fact that the latter differs markedly from the account in the biography. The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* begins its story as follows:

"A certain native of P'u-yang,⁵ Lü Pu-wei, was a merchant at Hantan, when he saw I-jen, who was a hostage from Ch'in.⁶ He returned (home) and said to his father:

"How much profit is to be gained from cultivating the fields?' The reply was: 'Ten.'

"How much profit is to be gained from pearls and jade (i. e., from trade in these things)?' The reply was: 'One hundred.'

"How much profit is to be gained from setting up the ruler of a state?' The reply was: 'Inestimable.'

"(Lü Pu-wei) said: 'If one works one's hardest cultivating the fields, one does not get enough for warm clothing or nourishing food. But the profit to be gained from organizing a state and setting up its ruler will continue for generations. I wish to go and do this. I-jen, a son of the House of Ch'in, is a hostage in Chao, and lives in the city of Liao.'

"He therefore went and spoke with him, saying: 'Tzū-hsi has the duty of inheriting the state, and moreover has a mother who is a favorite.'⁷ But now you do not have a mother who is a favorite, and you

⁴ *Ch'in Ts'e*, V, 5.

⁵ 濮陽, in the hsien of the same name in southern Hopei.

⁶ I-jen 異人 is another name for Tzū-ch'u. See below.

⁷ Lit., "who is within (the court)." Tzū-hsi 子侯, according to the commentary of Kao Yu (fl. A. D. 205-212), was then the Crown Prince of Ch'in, and was a half-brother of I-jen, having the same father but a different mother.

have been sent abroad to a state where nothing can be known about you. If for a single day the treaty (between Ch'in and Chao) were to be broken, you would become mere dirt.⁸ Now if you listen to my plan to bring about your return (to Ch'in), you will be able to gain possession of the state of Ch'in. I shall act on your behalf so as to make Ch'in come and ask for you (to return).'⁹

The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* goes on to relate that Lü Pu-wei then held a conversation with the Lord of Yang-ch'üan 陽泉君, who was a younger brother of the Queen (the same as the Lady Hua-yang of the biography). In this conversation he urged that I-jen should be made the Crown Prince of Ch'in in place of the actual Crown Prince, Tzū-hsi. The Lord of Yang-ch'üan agreed to speak to the Queen about the matter, with the result that the Queen asked the state of Chao for the return of I-jen to Ch'in. The Chao government was at first reluctant to do this, until persuaded by Lü Pu-wei that it would be to its best interests to acquiesce. I-jen was then released, and on his first presentation to the Queen of Ch'in, Lü Pu-wei cleverly had him dress up in the costume of Ch'u, the state of which the Queen was a native. Delighted by this, the Queen changed his name from I-jen to Ch'u (after the name of her state), and adopted him as her own son. (This is the reason why the biography always calls him Tzū-ch'u, which may be translated as "Master Ch'u.")

At a later meeting Tzū-ch'u also favorably impressed the King of Ch'in, who made him Crown Prince. The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* concludes by saying that when the King died and Tzū-ch'u replaced him as ruler, he made Lü Pu-wei his minister, and conferred on him the title of Marquis of Wen-hsin, with the revenue of a feudal estate of twelve *hsien* or prefectures at Lan-t'ien.⁹ At the same time the Queen who had adopted him became known as the Queen-dowager Hua-yang.

The following paragraphs will point out in detail the differences between the *Chan Kuo Ts'e* and *Shih Chi*, some of which are already apparent in this brief summary. A similar comparison between the two versions has already been made by Ch'ien Mu in his *Hsien-Ch'in Ch'u-tzū Hsi-nien*.¹⁰ Hence I have placed asterisks before those paragraphs which contain differences to which Professor Ch'ien has already called attention.

(1) Lü Pu-wei, according to the biography, was a native of Yang-ti (in present Honan), but according to the *Chan Kuo Ts'e* he was a native of P'u-yan (in present Hopei).

⁸ I. e., you would be promptly executed by Chao.

⁹ 藍田, probably in the present *hsien* of the same name in Shensi, a few miles southeast of the city of Sian.

¹⁰ Sect. 161, which is a special study on Lü Pu-wei. For this work, see p. 6, note 24.

(2) Throughout the biography, Lü Pu-wei's protégé is known as Tzū-ch'ü, whereas the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* states that his name was I-jen until he was renamed Ch'ü by his foster mother. (This added realistic detail should serve to increase our confidence in the reliability of the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*.)

(3) The two versions differ widely in their accounts of how Lü Pu-wei first met Tzū-ch'ü.

* (4) The biography states that when Lü Pu-wei went to Ch'in on Tzū-ch'ü's behalf, he spoke with Lady Hua-yang's elder sister, whereas the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* says that he spoke with her younger brother, the Lord of Yang-ch'üan.

* (5) The biography refers to the wife of the Prince of An-kuo as Lady Hua-yang. This means that her adoption of Tzū-ch'ü must have occurred sometime between 265 (the year when the Prince of An-kuo was made Crown Prince) and 259 (the year when Prince Cheng, i. e., the later First Emperor) was born. But the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* refers to her simply as the Queen, which means that the adoption of Tzū-ch'ü could have taken place only in 250, the single year when the Prince of An-kuo reigned as King Hsiao-wen of Ch'in.

(6) The *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* omits entirely the account in the biography of how Prince Cheng, though supposedly the son of Tzū-ch'ü, was actually the natural son of Lü Pu-wei.

* (7) The biography states that when the Chao capital, Han-tan, was besieged by Ch'in in 257, Tzū-ch'ü and Lü Pu-wei escaped to Ch'in by bribing their keeper. The *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* mentions nothing of this, but states that when the Queen of Ch'in (i. e., Lady Hua-yang) asked for Tzū-ch'ü's return, Chao at first would not release him, until persuaded to do so by Lü Pu-wei.

(8) The biography states that Lü Pu-wei was given a fief of 100,000 households near the present city of Loyang, Honan, whereas the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* states that he was given twelve prefectures at Lan-t'ien, not far from what is now Sian, Shensi, and hence several hundred miles removed from Honan.

Furthermore, Professor Ch'ien Mu has already pointed out in his article that when earlier historical materials, such as the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*, exist, Ssü-ma Ch'ien usually follows them fairly closely in his history. Certainly this fact is true, as we shall see, in the case of the biography of Ching K'ô translated below. The fact, therefore, that Lü Pu-wei's biography differs so markedly from the account in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*,

may at once make us suspect that it has not come from the hand of Ssü-ma Ch'ien himself, but is the product of some other writer. This fact alone, however, cannot be regarded as conclusive, unless it can be shown that the biography's version is less probable than that in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*. This I shall attempt to prove in the pages that follow:

(1) The fifth paragraph of the biography contains a sentence which is a repetition of what has just been stated earlier, and hence is probably an interpolation.¹¹

(2) Following the escape of Tzŭ-ch'ü and Lü Pu-wei from Chao during the siege of the Chao capital in 257, the biography states (p. 4) that "Chao wished to kill the wife of Tzŭ-ch'ü. But the Lady of Tzŭ-ch'ü, being a woman of a wealthy Chao family, succeeded in having herself hidden, so that in this way both mother and child finally managed to save their lives."

Now we know from the biography that Tzŭ-ch'ü's wife had formerly been an ordinary courtesan (*chi* 姬) of Han-tan, who had been selected by Lü Pu-wei to be his concubine because she "was extremely beautiful and an excellent dancer." How, then, could such a person have belonged to a wealthy Chao family? Moreover, the distinction in this passage between the word "wife" (*ch'ü* 妻) and the more polite term "lady" (*fu jen* 夫人), is a very curious one. Does the word "wife" perhaps refer to Lü Pu-wei's former concubine, and the "lady" of the next sentence refer to some other woman of good family who was Tzŭ-ch'ü's proper wife? Such a hypothesis is improbable in itself. Furthermore, it is contradicted by the preceding paragraph, which states clearly that after Tzŭ-ch'ü took Lü Pu-wei's concubine, he made her his proper wife; also by the paragraph which follows, which states that "(the state of) Chao also sent the Lady of Tzŭ-ch'ü, and her son, Cheng, back to Ch'in." Regardless of which way we look at it, this passage is inconsistent and gives a strong impression of being tampered with.¹²

(3) The entire story that Lü Pu-wei was the natural father of the First Emperor, depends for its proof on a single sentence in the biography, which states (p. 4), following the account of how Lü Pu-wei gave his concubine to Tzŭ-ch'ü: "The concubine kept to herself the fact that she was pregnant, and at the expiration of a great period she bore a son, Cheng." The expression, "great period" (*ta ch'ü* 大期), has been explained by the commentator, Hsü Kuang, as meaning an abnormally long pregnancy of twelve months.¹³ But even allowing the correct-

¹¹ See p. 2, note 4.

¹² Ch'ien Mu, *op. cit.*, has already pointed out this inconsistency.

¹³ See p. 4, note 12.

ness of this interpretation, which is not at all certain, the problem still remains of what proof Ssü-ma Ch'ien could have had for the truth of this story (which sounds very much like idle gossip), if the concubine really did conceal the fact that she was pregnant, so that even Tzū-ch'ü did not know of it? On the other hand, if the pregnancy was, after all, the usual one of nine months, then why should it not be equally logical to suppose that Tzū-ch'ü, and not Lü Pu-wei, was the father of the First Emperor?

(4) The above story is not only not found in the parallel account in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ü*; it occurs nowhere else in the *Shih Chi*. The sixth chapter of the *Shih Chi*, however, contains a passage which is very possibly the basis from which the story has been derived. This passage states:¹⁴ "The First Sovereign Emperor of Ch'in was the son of King Chuang-hsiang of Ch'in. While King Chuang-hsiang as a prince was a hostage for Ch'in in Chao, he saw the concubine of Lü Pu-wei. He liked and married her, and she gave birth to the First Emperor. In the first month of the forty-eighth year of King Chao of Ch'in (259 B. C.), he was born at Han-tan." For a man of imagination, it would not be a far step from this passage to invent the story that the First Emperor was the actual son of Lü Pu-wei.

(5) A very important point, and one that has already been called attention to by Ch'ien Mu in his article mentioned above, is the fact that the story of the birth of the First Emperor is not unique in the Chinese literature of this time. Indeed, a story very similar to it is to be found in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ü*.¹⁵ According to this story, King K'ao-lieh of Ch'u (262-238) had for a long time tried in vain to secure an heir. A certain man of Chao, named Li Yüan 李園, seizing upon the situation, took the opportunity to introduce his sister to the Lord of Ch'un-shen 春申君, who at that time held a dominant position in Ch'u very similar to that of Lü Pu-wei in Ch'in. The Lord of Ch'un-shen liked her and took her, and she became pregnant. Thereupon, at Li Yüan's instigation, she suggested to the Lord of Ch'un-shen that she should immediately be presented as a concubine to the childless King, so that if she should give birth to a son, it would really be a son of the Lord of Ch'un-shen who would become heir to the throne. This was agreed to, and after entering the King's harem, she actually did give birth to a son who was proclaimed as the Crown Prince by the unsuspecting King. Soon after this intrigue, in the year 238, the old King died, and at the same time the original plotter, Li Yüan, had the Lord of

¹⁴ *Ch'u Ts'ü*, IV, 12. The same story is found in the *Shih Chi*, ch. 78, pp. 2b-3a.

¹⁵ *Mém. hist.*, II, 100.

Ch'un-shen assassinated. The false Crown Prince, who was really the son of the Lord of Ch'un-shen, was then made King of Ch'u.

It should be noted that the Lord of Ch'un-shen and Lü Pu-wei were both prominent statesmen, were contemporaries of each other, and held comparable positions in two different states. Also that the concubines in the two stories both came from Chao. Starting from these points, Professor Ch'ien Mu argues very plausibly that the *Chan Kuo Ts'e* story has supplied the probable inspiration for the story in the *Shih Chi*, which makes Lü Pu-wei the father of the first Emperor. Such a supposition is all the more probable in view of the fact, as pointed out in paragraph 4, that the mother of the First Emperor actually was, after all, Lü Pu-wei's former concubine; a fact which gives a basis of credibility for the whole story. Further support is supplied by the other inconsistencies in the biography, already discussed, and finally by the fact that it differs so markedly from the *Chan Kuo Ts'e*, a work which Ssü-ma Ch'ien usually follows fairly closely for his narrative.

The conclusion, then, seems to be inescapable that the first half of the biography is largely an invention. And the reason for this invention is not far to seek. The Confucian scholars of the Han dynasty detested the First Emperor of Ch'in as the incarnation of tyranny and the destroyer of culture. They hated the Ch'in government because it represented the harsh philosophy of Legalism which was so opposed to their own. The story of the First Emperor's birth, therefore, is probably the clever invention of some Han Confucian, who has used it to defame the First Emperor by representing him as the bastard son of a shrewd, unscrupulous, uneducated merchant, and of a mother who was little better than a prostitute.

It does not seem probable that Ssü-ma Ch'ien himself was the inventor of this story, or even that he took it over to form part of Lü Pu-wei's biography. His general honesty and integrity speak against such a theory. A more probable hypothesis is that the biography in its present state is only a mangled remnant of Ssü-ma Ch'ien's original narrative, which has been so greatly worked over by some later propagandizing reviser, that the original portions are no longer distinguishable. Such, at least, is what the interpolation and other inconsistencies within the text would seem to show us. Had the biography, on the contrary, been written by some person wholly anew, without reference to an earlier source, we would expect it to flow more smoothly and have none of these inconsistencies.

In the following pages we shall see that the second half of the biography, which is chiefly concerned with the rather disgusting intrigue

between Lao Ai and the First Emperor's mother, must also be accepted with reserve. There is no *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* version to help us in our study of this half of the biography, but in its place we have the account of the political events in Ch'in during this time, as found in the sixth chapter of the *Shih Chi*. The suspicious points which I have been able to detect in the biography are the following:

(1) On p. 7, the story of how the Queen mother went into retirement at Yung in order to prevent people from knowing about her love affair with Lao Ai, is directly contradicted by what the biography itself says a few paragraphs lower down, under the year 238. There it is stated that following the collapse of Lao Ai's revolt, the king of Ch'in "removed the Queen-dowager to Yung," where, according to the earlier passage, she would already have been staying.

(2) On p. 7 of the biography, the paragraph devoted to the death of the Queen-dowager Hsia in 240 B.C. is very probably an interpolation. This paragraph describes how she was buried between her husband and her son, where before her death she predicted that "one hundred years from now, there will be beside me a city of ten thousand families." The passage not only lacks connection with what precedes and follows, but its prophecy has probably been borrowed from a similar one found in the biography of the Ch'in general, Ch'u Li-tzu 樛里子, who died long before, in 300 B.C. In the latter biography, the general is represented as saying shortly before his death: "One hundred years from now, there will be the palace of a Son of Heaven beside my grave."¹⁶

(3) The biography (p. 8) records under the year 238 that the execution of Lao Ai took place in the ninth month, whereas the *Shih Chi*'s sixth chapter, which gives a much fuller account, records the execution under the fourth month.¹⁷

(4) The biography further states that in 237 the King of Ch'in removed from office a certain man of Ch'i, Mao Chiao, because the latter had reproached him for his severe measures in crushing the Lao Ai revolt. It has already been pointed out¹⁸ that the sixth chapter of the *Shih Chi*, on the contrary, states that Mao Chiao succeeded in persuading the King of Ch'in to pardon his mother; also that this version is confirmed by the *Shuo Yüan*.

(5) The biography (p. 9) states that when the Queen-dowager died in the year 228, she was given the posthumous title of Empress-dowager

¹⁶ See *Shih Chi*, ch. 71, p. 1b.

¹⁷ *Mém. hist.*, II, 108-112.

¹⁸ See p. 8, note 35.

(*ti t'ai hou* 帝太后). It is difficult to understand how such a posthumous title could have been given in 228, when the king of Ch'in himself only assumed the title of Emperor (*ti* 帝) after the unification of China in 221, while in the very same year he abolished the practice of conferring posthumous titles.¹⁹

The solution of the puzzle may possibly be found in the corresponding passage in the sixth chapter, which records under the year 228: ²⁰ "The (later) First Sovereign Emperor's mother, the Queen-dowager, died." The Chinese text reads: *Shih huang li mu t'ai hou peng* 始皇帝母太后崩. The First Emperor is known in Chinese either by his full title of Shih-huang-ti, or by the abbreviated form of Shih-huang. In the present case it is barely possible that a careless reader might fail to recognize that the word *ti* is a part of the imperial title, Shih-huang-ti, and might link it instead with the two following words, *t'ai hou* (meaning "Queen-dowager"), with the consequence that he might assume it to be part of another title, *li t'ai hou* (meaning "Empress-dowager"). Because of such a mistake in reading, he might easily conclude that the Queen-dowager, on her death, had been given the posthumous title of Empress-dowager. The way in which this conclusion would be reached can be shown graphically as follows: [*Shih huang*] *ti* [*mu*] *t'ai hou* [*peng*].

If such an explanation is correct, however, it is certain proof that this passage in the biography has been written by someone other than Ssü-ma Ch'ien, for Ssü-ma Ch'ien himself could never have made such a gross error in reading his own text in the sixth chapter.

(6) Ssü-ma Ch'ien's general summary at the end of the biography begins with the words: "(Lü) Pu-wei and Lao Ai were ennobled with the title of Marquis of Wen-hsin." I have already pointed out that this statement is incorrect and indicates that something has dropped out of the text.²¹

(7) It is significant that the account of Lao Ai's revolt, as given in the body of the biography, differs materially from that contained in Ssü-ma Ch'ien's general summary at the end, and that this, in its turn, resembles rather closely the more detailed account found in the *Shih Chi's* sixth chapter. A comparison of the three versions will bring this out clearly:

Biography (p. 8): "In the ninth month, he [i.e., the King of Ch'in] exterminated Lao Ai (and his kindred) to the third degree,

¹⁹ See *Mém. hist.*, II, 128.

²⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 120.

²¹ See p. 9, note 39.

executed the two children who had been born to the Queen-dowager, and then removed the Queen-dowager to Yung. He destroyed the houses of all of Lao Ai's retainers, and removed them (the retainers) to Shu."

Biography (general summary, p. 68): "When the King went to the suburb of Yung, (Lao) Ai, fearing that disaster would come, plotted with his party to counterfeit the seal of the Queen-dowager and to send out soldiers to overthrow the Ch'i-nien palace. Magistrates were dispatched to attack (Lao) Ai, and he fled, vanquished and in disorder. He was pursued and beheaded at Hao-chih, after which his family was exterminated."

Sixth chapter (*Mém. hist.*, II, 108-111): "In the fourth month, the ruler spent the night at Yung . . . (Lao) Ai, Marquis of Ch'ang-hsin, fomented a rebellion, and when it was discovered, he counterfeited the personal seal of the King and the seal of the Queen-dowager. . . . He proposed to attack the Ch'i-nien palace and make a revolt. When the King learned of this, he ordered . . . [here follow two names] . . . to raise soldiers to attack (Lao) Ai . . . (Lao) Ai and his men were defeated and fled . . . (The King) destroyed (Lao) Ai and all his accomplices . . . while their relatives and followers were exterminated."

The fact that Ssü-ma Ch'ien's general summary is more detailed and at the same time so different from the account of the Lao Ai revolt given in the body of the biography, can suggest only one thing: that the two passages have been written by different persons. And the fact that the general summary approaches so closely the more detailed account in the sixth chapter, suggests still further the probability that in this summary (despite its opening sentence of corrupted text), we still have the original words of Ssü-ma Ch'ien, whereas the other part of the biography has been revised by some other person.

Nevertheless, the second half of the biography, despite all its inconsistencies, seems to have suffered fewer major factual changes than has the first half. For the most part, at least, it seems to have followed fairly closely the historical events as they are given in the sixth chapter. For the latter, at any rate, though it is vague on this point, definitely does hint at the existence of some kind of relationship between the Queen-dowager and Lao Ai, which in the biography is openly explained as a common love affair. Some of the biography's minor details, however, and especially the lurid account of the way in which Lü Pu-wei enticed the Queen-dowager by means of Lao Ai, have probably been added from imagination. And once more this has been done for the sole purpose of casting disrepute on both the First Emperor's mother and on his supposed father, Lü Pu-wei; which for the Chinese, with their strong reverence for ancestors, constitutes the worst form of insult.

In conclusion, then, we may say that the biography of Lü Pu-wei has been so altered since it was first written by Ssü-ma Ch'ien, that it is no longer possible to reconstitute it in its original form. The concluding general summary probably still contains the words of Ssü-ma Ch'ien, and there may be other passages which have been left relatively unchanged, such as that describing the compiling of the *Lü-shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, which contains nothing inherently improbable. But this is a point which it is impossible to determine exactly. Certainly it is safe to say that much of the biography has been seriously tampered with, and that in all likelihood the story that Lü Pu-wei was the father of the First Emperor, is a pure invention, probably created by some Confucian of the Han dynasty in order to cast slander on the First Emperor. If this has been its purpose, the attempt has certainly been successful, for even now, two thousand years later, the story is commonly believed by most Chinese.

II

THE BIOGRAPHY OF CHING K'O

TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

3a Ching K'o was a native of Wei.¹ His forebears had been natives of Ch'i who had moved to Wei. The people of Wei called him Master Ch'ing,² but when he went to Yen,³ the people called him Master Ching.

Master Ching liked to read books and to handle the sword. Through his arts, he gained speech with Prince Yüan of Wei (251-230), but Prince Yüan would not employ him. Later on Ch'in attacked Wei,⁴ established the commandery of Tung (out of the territory it captured),⁵ and moved a relative of Prince Yüan to Yeh-wang.⁶

Once when Ching K'o was travelling through Yü-ts'e,⁷ he held a conversation with one Ko Nieh about swords. Ko Nieh became angry and gave him a fierce look, and Ching K'o went away. Someone said that they should call Master Ching back. Ko Nieh said: "In the past, if I talked with someone about swords and he did not suit me, I would give him a fierce look. If this has caused him to leave, it is quite proper that he has left, and I shall not venture to detain him." (However), he sent a messenger to his master, but Ching K'o had then already harnessed his horse and departed from Yü-ts'e. The messenger returned and reported

¹ 衛, a petty state near the present P'u-yang 濮陽 hsien at the south end of Hopei, to be carefully distinguished from the larger state of Wei 魏, which was one of the important seven states of the Warring States period.

² 卿 (translated as "Master") is used here and below as a term of respect. Ssu-ma Cheng points out in his commentary that there was a family in Ch'i (modern Shantung) which had borne the name given here of Ch'ing 慶. During his travels, however, Ching K'o's name became changed from Ch'ing to Ching 荆.

³ A state in Hopei, near the present Peiping.

⁴ 魏, an important state occupying northern Honan and southwestern Shansi, which at this time dominated the lesser state of Wei 衛 mentioned above in the first sentence.

⁵ A large region south of the present P'u-yang 濮陽 hsien, Hopei.

⁶ This event happened in 241 B. C., but it was not a relative of Prince Yüan, but Prince Yüan himself, who was thus shifted. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 104-105, and note 1 on p. 105. Ssu-ma Ch'ien implies by this anecdote that if Prince Yüan had employed Ching K'o, he would have escaped this disaster. Yeh-wang was in what is now Ch'in-yang 沁陽 hsien in Honan.

⁷ Near the present Taiyuanfu, the capital of Shansi; it was then part of the state of Chao.

this. Ko Nieh said: "He has indeed gone. I have given him a fierce look and frightened him."⁸

When Ching K'ó was travelling to Han-tan,⁹ one Lu Kou-chien disputed with him for the right of way. Lu Kou-chien became angry and reviled him, but Ching K'ó escaped without saying anything, and did not again confront him.¹⁰

On arriving in Yen, Ching K'ó became fond of a certain "dog butcher" of Yen and of Kao Chien-li, who was an excellent lute player.¹¹ Ching K'ó liked wine, and every day he drank with the dog butcher and with Kao Chien-li in the market-place of the Yen (capital), becoming drunk before he departed. While Kao Chien-li strummed his lute, Ching K'ó would sing and make merry with him in the midst of the market-place. Afterwards they would weep together, as if there were no one around them.

3b Yet though Ching K'ó mixed with drunkards, he was a serious man who loved books, and the persons with whom he associated during his travels among the feudal lords were all of superior worth and excellence. When he came to Yen, a Mr. T'ien Kuang, who was a retired gentleman in Yen, also received him well, and knowing that he was not an ordinary man, had him live with him for some time. It was just at this period that Tan, Crown Prince of Yen, who had been a hostage in Ch'in, returned in flight to Yen.¹²

Crown Prince Tan of Yen had at one time been a hostage in Chao, and Cheng, the King of Ch'in, had been born in Chao.¹³ In his youth he had been friendly with Tan, but when Cheng became King of Ch'in and Tan was a hostage in Ch'in, the King of Ch'in did not treat Crown Prince

⁸ According to Wang Nien-sun 王念孫 (1744-1832), 懼 is here equivalent to 懼, and means "to frighten."

⁹ Capital of the state of Chao, ten li southwest of the present Han-tan hsien in Hopei.

¹⁰ These incidents are given by Ssü-ma Ch'ien to show that Ching K'ó, though brave in a righteous cause (as will be seen later), was by nature of a conciliatory and gentle disposition.

¹¹ The kind of lute mentioned here (*shu* 箏), was, according to Ssü-ma Cheng, strummed with a piece of bamboo. Hence the appearance of the bamboo "determinative" in the Chinese character. Dog meat was eaten in ancient China, but such a "dog butcher" (*kou t'u* 狗屠) was a very lowly man, and in later times the expression "dog butcher" has come to be used generally to denote any mean person of lowly origin.

¹² This event happened in 232 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, IV, 149. For the custom of sending hostages to different states, see preceding biography, p. 1, note 3.

¹³ This was the later unifier of China, the famous First Emperor of Ch'in (246-210 B. C.). He was born in Chao in 259 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 100. For the correct form of his personal name, Cheng, see p. 4, note 12.

Tan of Yen well. Therefore Tan became angry and fled back (to Yen). On his return, he looked for someone who would take vengeance on the King of Ch'in, but his state was small and its power inadequate.

Later on Ch'in was constantly sending forth its soldiers east of the mountains¹⁴ to attack Ch'i, Ch'u, and the three Chin.¹⁵ Gradually it made encroachments upon the feudal lords, even unto Yen. The lords and ministers of Yen all feared that disaster would befall it, and [Crown Prince Tan, being worried, asked his tutor, Chü Wu, about the matter.¹⁶

Chü Wu said: "The territory of Ch'in spreads through the world, and it has intimidated the houses of Han, Wei and Chao.] In the north it possesses the fortifications of Kan-ch'üan and Ku-k'ou.¹⁷ In the south it has the irrigation of the Ching and the Wei.¹⁸ It has seized for itself the riches of Pa and Han.¹⁹ On its right are the mountains of Lung and Shu,²⁰ and on its left are the defiles of Kuan and Hsiao.²¹ Its people are numerous and its gentry are dangerous. It has an overabundance of military supplies. Once it has the idea of sallying forth, then south of the Great Wall and [north of the I river there can be no security.²²

¹⁴ I. e., east of the strategic Han-ku 函谷 pass which separated Ch'in from the other feudal states on the east, and which was located south of the present Ling-pao 靈寶 hsien in Honan.

¹⁵ The three states of Han, Chao and Wei, into which the state of Chin had been divided in 403 B. C.

¹⁶ The account in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* (Plots of the Warring States), *Yen Ts'ê*, III, 5, from which this account is evidently taken, begins at this bracket, breaks off at the end of the next sentence, and then continues again in the middle of the sixth sentence below, as indicated by the brackets.

¹⁷ There are several places called Kan-ch'üan in Shensi, but this one is probably that in the hsien of the same name toward the north of Shansi. The mention of Ku-k'ou here is decidedly strange, as its location northwest of Ching-yang 滎陽 hsien, Shensi, puts it almost in the same latitude as the Ch'ing and the Wei, mentioned immediately below as being to the south.

¹⁸ The Ching river meets the Wei river very near the present city of Sian in Shensi; the Wei joins the Yellow river at the place where the latter makes its right angled bend to the north.

¹⁹ Pa was a wild region in what is now Szechuan, conquered by Ch'in in 316 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 72. The Han river flows through southern Shensi, and joins the Yangtze at Hankow.

²⁰ Lung was in a hsien of the same name in Shensi. Shu was in Szechuan, close to Pa. See preceding biography, p. 8, note 34.

²¹ Kuan, meaning "the Pass," was the Han-ku pass, for which see note 14. The Hsiao pass was fifty *li* north of Yung-ning 永寧 hsien in Honan. Left and right for a Chinese would mean east and west respectively, as the Chinese cardinal direction is the south.

²² The *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* resumes its account at this point, and continues, save for one fair sized omission on p. 27, almost word for word the same down to p. 35. The Great Wall here referred to was not the famous Great Wall built by

How, with the hatred that comes of oppression, can you wish to oppose it?"²³

"Well, then," said Tan, "what is to be done?"

He replied: "I beg to retire and think the matter over."

After some period of time had elapsed, Fan Yü-ch'í, a Ch'in general, who had fallen into disgrace with the King of Ch'in, fled as a fugitive to Yen, where the Crown Prince received and sheltered him. Chü Wu remonstrated, saying: "You cannot do this. When, with all his harshness, the King of Ch'in heaps up hatred against Yen, it is enough to chill one's heart. How much more so when he hears of the whereabouts of General Fan! This is called throwing meat in the path of a hungry tiger. The (resulting) disaster is inescapable. Even if you had Kuan or Yen, they could not plan (successfully) against it."²⁴

"I should like the Crown Prince to send off General Fan quickly to the Huns²⁵ in order to do away with him. I beg you to ally yourself with the three Chin on the west, link yourself with Ch'í and Ch'u on the south, and put yourself on good terms with the *Shan-yü* on the north."²⁶ After this you can make plans."

The Crown Prince said: "The Grand Tutor's plan is something for a long period. But I am stupid in mind and fear I cannot wait even a moment. Yet this is not the only point. For General Fan was in great straits in the world when he gave himself to me, and never, to the end

the state of Ch'in, the construction of which is described in the following biography; it was one of several walls which had been built by different states at various times, and which were later consolidated by Ch'in into one system. The reference here is to the state of Yen, which occupied the area between the Great Wall and the I river.

There were three I rivers in ancient times, all near each other in Hopei. The one here referred to was probably that which flowed from the hsien of the same name in western Hopei, down to the southeast of Ting-hsing 定興 hsien on the Peiping-Hankow railway, where it joined the Chü-ma 拒馬 river.

²³ Lit., "to rub against its resisting scales" (批其逆鱗). The figure occurs in the *Han-fei-tzú*, end of ch. 12, where it refers to the resisting scales of the dragon. Its meaning is that of opposing oneself to one's superior or to a superior force.

²⁴ These were Kuan Chung (died 645 B.C.) and Yen Ying (died 500 B.C.), who were prime ministers in the state of Ch'í and were among the most famous statesmen of antiquity.

²⁵ Hsiung-nu 匈奴, nomadic tribes to the northwest of China, who some centuries later were driven out by the Chinese and migrated to the West, where they have been identified with the famous Huns.

²⁶ The *Shan-yü* 單于 was the title by which the Huns addressed their leader. 購 should here be read as 講, in accordance with the version in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ao*. Ssu-ma Cheng explains it as 和 (to harmonize), i.e., "to put oneself on good terms with."

of my life, could I, because of pressure from a powerful Ch'in, cast aside the bonds of pity and compassion and put him away among the Huns. (If I did such a thing), it would certainly be time for me to die. Let the Grand Tutor reconsider the matter."

Chü Wu said:] "To move into danger thereby wishing to gain peace; to create calamities thereby to obtain good fortune; to hold to shallow plans (for requiting) deep hatreds; to bind oneself in lasting bonds to a single man, without regard for the great harm therefrom to the nation: such is what is called encouraging enmities and inviting disaster. When wild duck feathers are burned on a stove's charcoal, there can be nothing to bother about.²⁷ All the more so, then, when eagle-like Ch'in carries out its cruel hates. What is there then to talk about?²⁸ [In Yen there is a Mr. T'ien Kuang who is a man of deep wisdom and great bravery. You can plan with him."

The Crown Prince said: "I should like through you to make the acquaintance of Mr. T'ien. Can it be done?"

Chü Wu replied: "I respectfully obey." He went to see Mr. T'ien and told him that the Crown Prince wished to discuss affairs of state with him. T'ien Kuang said: "I respectfully receive his command," and thereupon went to him. The Crown Prince welcomed him, led him inside, knelt, and dusted off the mat (for him to sit on).²⁹

T'ien Kuang sat down and settled himself, and there was nobody around them. The Crown Prince moved from his mat (toward his visitor) and requested him, saying: "Yen and Ch'in cannot both stand. I should like you, sir, to put your mind on this fact."

T'ien Kuang replied: "Your servant has heard that when the unicorn is in its prime, it can traverse one thousand li.³⁰ But when it has become weak and old, a broken down nag can outstrip it. The Crown Prince has heard (falsely) that I am in my prime, and does not know that I have already lost my vitality. Nevertheless, I dare not on that account slight³¹ affairs of state. A good person who could be employed would be Master Ching."

²⁷ I. e., Yen will be consumed by Ch'in as easily as the wild duck's feathers will burn in the stove.

²⁸ I. e., no one can withstand such a cruel force as Ch'in. All this speech to this point has been added by Ssu-ma Ch'ien and does not appear in the *Chan Kuo Ts'e*, which continues its account with the next sentence.

²⁹ Taking 蔽 as equivalent to 拂 (to dust off). The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* reads 拂, which has the same meaning.

³⁰ The unicorn is the Chinese mythical animal, the *ch'i-lin* 麒麟, which like the unicorn, has a single horn on its forehead. About three li 里 equal an English mile.

³¹ Taking the *Chan Kuo Ts'e*'s reading of 乏, instead of 圖.

The Crown Prince said: "I should like through you to make the acquaintance of Master Ching. Can it be done?"

T'ien Kuang replied: "I respectfully obey." He then arose and departed. The Crown Prince escorted him to the gate, and warned him, saying: "What I have told you and what you have said are important state matters. I wish you, sir, not to discuss them."

4a T'ien Kuang nodded and smiled, saying: "I obey." With body stooped (by age) he departed to see Master Ching, to whom he said: "There is no one in the state of Yen who does not know that we are on good terms with each other. The Crown Prince heard to-day that I was in my prime, but he did not know that my body is already failing. He graciously told me: 'Yen and Ch'in cannot both stand. I should like you, sir, to put your mind on this fact.' I was careful not to alienate myself (from this matter), and I spoke of you to the Crown Prince. I should like you to go to the Crown Prince at his palace."

Ching K'ò said: "I respectfully receive your instructions."

T'ien Kuang continued: "I have heard that an old man, when he acts, does not cause people to doubt him. (But) now the Crown Prince has said to me: 'What we have spoken about are important state matters. I wish you, sir, not to disclose them.' This means that the Crown Prince doubts me. One who acts so as to make people doubt him is not an upright gentleman."

In order to inspire Master Ching (with feelings of heroism), he wished to kill himself (as an example of uprightness), and continued: "I want you to go quickly to the Crown Prince and tell him that I have already died, so as to show him that I have not spoken." With this, he cut his throat and died.

Ching K'ò then went to see the Crown Prince. He told him that T'ien Kuang was already dead, and reported what (T'ien) Kuang had said. The Crown Prince bowed twice, knelt, moved about on his knees,²² and wept. Some moments passed and then he said: "The reason why I warned Mr. T'ien not to speak was because I wished to bring the plans for an important matter to fruition. But now Mr. T'ien has used death to show that he did not speak. Alas! What intent was it of mine?"

Ching K'ò sat down and settled himself. The Crown Prince moved from his mat (toward his visitor), bowed his head, and said: "Not knowing of my unworthiness, Mr. T'ien has done what you have just dared to relate. Heaven has afflicted Yen in this, yet it has not abandoned its Orphan."²³

²² An expression of grief.

²³ The ruler of a state often referred to himself as "orphan" (*ku* 孤), because it is characteristic of a ruler that his father is dead. As *Ssu-ma Ching* points

"Ch'in has an avaricious heart and its desires are insatiable. It will remain unsatisfied until it has made subject the kings of all the lands in the world within the seas. Ch'in has now already taken the King of Han captive and has annexed all his territory.⁸⁴ It has furthermore raised soldiers to attack Ch'u in the south and overlook Chao in the north. Wang Chien,⁸⁵ commanding a host of several hundreds of thousands, has reached Chang and Yeh,⁸⁶ while Li Hsin⁸⁷ has gone to T'ai-yüan and Yün-chung.⁸⁸

"Chao cannot withstand Ch'in and must become its vassal. If it becomes its vassal, disaster will then overtake Yen. Yen is small and weak, and has often suffered from war. Were I now to plan to conscript the entire country, (the result) would be insufficient to oppose Ch'in. The feudal lords are submissive to Ch'in, and none of them dare to join in a north-to-south alliance.⁸⁹

"My secret plan would be actually to secure one of the world's brave men and send him to Ch'in, where he could attract⁴⁰ the King of Ch'in's cupidity by (the promise of) great profit. With his strength,⁴¹ he would certainly obtain for us what we desire. If he could actually succeed in carrying off the King of Ch'in and force him to return all the territory of the feudal lords that has been invaded, as Ts'ao Mo did with Duke Huan of Ch'i, it would be splendid.⁴² But if this were not possible, he could use the opportunity to stab and kill him. If, while the great Ch'in generals were holding their troops outside (the borders), there

out, however, the expression is an anachronism here, because Crown Prince Tan was not yet ruling, and his father was yet alive.

⁸⁴ This happened in 230 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, V, 222.

⁸⁵ One of the best known of the Ch'in generals. See his biography in the *Shih Chi*, ch. 73.

⁸⁶ Places close to each other in the present Lin-chang 臨漳 hsien in Honan, and forty li west of this hsien, respectively.

⁸⁷ Another well known Ch'in general of the time.

⁸⁸ T'ai-yüan was at the present Taiyuanfu, the capital of Shansi. Yün-chung was a large region occupying present northern Shansi, Suiyuan, and part of Mongolia.

⁸⁹ *Tsung 從*, lit. "vertical," alliance, often attempted by the other states as a defense against Ch'in, which on its part tried to form horizontal alliances, called *heng 衡*, extending from west to east.

⁴⁰ Taking 闕 as equivalent to 闕, which is itself equivalent to 陷.

⁴¹ The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* reads 寶 (gifts) instead of 勢 (strength).

⁴² The biography of Ts'ao Mo heads ch. 86 of the *Shih Chi*, of which Ching K'o's biography forms a part, and which is devoted to noted assassins. At a diplomatic meeting which took place between the states of Ch'i and Lu in 681 B. C., Ts'ao Mo, who was a native of Lu, threatened physical violence to Duke Huan and thus forced him to give back to Lu what he had won in three battles. See *Mém. hist.*, IV, 49-50 and 110.

were to be trouble within, then ruler and ministers would mutually distrust each other. And if at this juncture the feudal lords could succeed in forming a north-to-south alliance, their defeat of Ch'in would be assured. This is my highest desire, but I know not to whom to entrust my mission. Do you, Master Ching, put your mind on this."

After some time Ching K'o said: "This is an important state matter. Your servant is an inferior nag, and fears that his capacities are inadequate for the trust."

The Crown Prince bowed before him and pressed him not to give up (the trust), after which he finally consented. He then honored Master Ching by making him a High Dignitary⁴³ and lodging him in a superior house. Every day the Crown Prince went to his door, offering him the *t'ai lao*,⁴⁴ giving him rare objects, at intervals bringing him carriages, horsemen, and beautiful women, and freely granting Ching K'o whatever he desired, so as to satisfy his inclinations.

After this had continued for some time, Ching K'o still had no idea of going away (to Ch'in). The Ch'in general, Wang Chien, defeated Chao, took its King captive, and annexed his entire territory.⁴⁵ He advanced his army northward, seizing territory as far as Yen's southern boundary. Crown Prince Tan was alarmed and begged Ching K'o, saying: "Once the Ch'in soldiers (are in a position) freely to cross the river I,⁴⁶ though I should then wish to support you, sir, how could it be done?"

Ching K'o replied: "I had intended to ask about this if you had not spoken of it. But were I to go now without having the confidence (of the state of Ch'in), then (the King of) Ch'in could still not be approached. The King of Ch'in has offered one thousand catties of gold and a city of ten thousand families for (the capture of) General Fan. Now if we could actually get hold of the head of General Fan and present it to the King of Ch'in, together with a map of Tu-k'ang in Yen,⁴⁷ then the King of Ch'in would certainly be pleased to see your

⁴³ *Shang ch'ing* 上卿.

⁴⁴ 太牢, consisting of a sheep, pig, and ox, which were used for sacrifices.

⁴⁵ This happened in 228 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 119.

⁴⁶ Which was Yen's southern boundary. See above, note 22.

⁴⁷ A fertile region situated south of the present I 易 hsien, Hopei. The giving of the map would symbolize the actual cession of the territory.

This seems to be the earliest reference we have to the existence of maps in China. See Chavannes, "Les deux plus anciens spécimens de la cartographie chinoise," in *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, vol. 3, 1903, p. 238. Chavannes, proceeding on the assumption that the hair brush was not yet known during the Ch'in dynasty, and that writing was done by means of a bamboo stylus, asserts that this map was not drawn, but was carved on a wooden block. There

servant, who would thus have the opportunity of avenging the Crown Prince."⁴⁸

The Crown Prince replied: "General Fan came to me in poverty and distress. I could not permit myself, for my own selfish aim, to violate a higher ideal. I should like you, sir, to reconsider the matter."

Ching K'ò realized that the Crown Prince would not consent, so he privately visited Fan Yü-ch'í and said to him: "Ch'in's treatment of you can be said to be a generous one! Your father, mother, and family have all been executed, and now I hear that a reward of one thousand catties of gold and a city of ten thousand families have been offered for your head. What are you doing to do?"

4b (Fan) Yü-ch'í looked up to Heaven, heaved a great sigh, shed some tears, and said: "Each (day) I think about this and suffer constantly unto my very bones and marrow. But whatever plan I consider, I know not where it will lead me."

Ching K'ò said: "I have here a single word which can free the state of Yen from its tribulations and avenge you of your hatred. How are you toward it?"

(Fan) Yü-ch'í came forward and asked: "What is it?"

Ching K'ò replied: "I should like to have your head to present to the King of Ch'in. Then the King of Ch'in would certainly be delighted to see me. With my left hand I should seize his sleeve, and with my right I should stab his breast. In this way your hatred (of Ch'in) would be avenged and the shame of Yen's oppression would be wiped out. What do you think of this?"

Fan Yü-ch'í bared his arm, seized his wrist,⁴⁹ and drew nearer, saying: "Day and night I have been grinding my teeth and beating my breast⁵⁰ on this account. But now I have heard my instructions." And with this he cut his throat.

When the Crown Prince heard of it, he hastened to the recumbent corpse and mourned with deep grief. But the deed was already accomplished and there was nothing to be done, so he placed the head of Fan Yü-ch'í in a container and closed it. After this the Crown Prince set about to look for one of the world's sharp daggers,⁵¹ and obtained one

is nothing in the text that would support such a theory, however, and we know to-day that the hair brush for writing existed long before the Ch'in dynasty, though it may have been improved during this period. See below, pp. 66-67. The mistake of Chavannes has been followed by W. E. Soothill, "The Two Oldest Maps of China Extant," in the *Geographical Journal*, vol. 69, 1927, p. 533.

⁴⁸ The words, "Crown Prince," are added from the *Chan Kuo Ts'ie* version.

⁴⁹ A gesture of determination.

⁵⁰ I take 磨 as 拊, according to the reading in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ie*.

⁵¹ Lit., "spoon head" (*pi shou* 匕首), a kind of dagger supposedly one foot

belonging to a man of Chao, Hsü Fu-jen.⁵² He gave him one hundred (catties of) gold for it and had a workman impregnate it with (poisonous) drugs, so that anybody whose clothing it caused to be stained with blood would immediately die. He then put this in a bag and had it sent to Master Ching.

In the state of Yen there was a bravo, Ch'in Wu-yang, who at the age of thirteen had (already) killed a man, so that no one dared to eye him contrarily.⁵³ Ch'in Wu-yang was then commanded to be assistant (to Ching K'o).

There was someone whom Ching K'o was waiting for, wishing to be with him (before starting off), and as this man lived far away and had not yet arrived, he delayed his going.⁵⁴ When after some time he had still not gone, the Crown Prince felt that (Ching K'o) was procrastinating, and suspected that he regretted (his decision), so he again requested him, saying: "The day is already done, and what are your intentions? I beg to be allowed to send Ch'in Wu-yang in advance."

Ching K'o became angry, and upbraided the Crown Prince, saying: "Who is this you would send!"⁵⁵ [This one who will go, never to return, is a mere boy. And he will be entering an immeasurably powerful Ch'in, carrying only a single dagger. I have delayed in order to await my visitor and be with him. But now that you say I am procrastinating, I beg to bid farewell.]

With this he departed. The Crown Prince and those of his pensioners who knew about the affair all (put on) white clothes and caps, so as to see him off as far as the bank of the river I.⁵⁶ Having offered a sacrifice

eight inches long, which gained its name from the fact that its tip or "head" was shaped like a spoon. See the *Tz'ü Yüan* 辭源 under this term.

⁵² P'ei Yin 裴駟 (held high office 485-472), in his commentary, states that there is one text which reads Ch'en 陳 instead of Hsü 徐.

⁵³ The *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* gives the age as twelve instead of thirteen. Concerning this Ch'in Wu-yang, we are told in the *Shih Chi*, ch. 110 (On the Huns), p. 2a: "Yen had a good general, Ch'in K'ai 秦開, who was a hostage among the Hu 胡 tribes. When he returned (to Yen), he made a surprise attack on the Eastern Hu and put them to flight. The Eastern Hu lost more than one thousand li (of territory). Ch'in Wu-yang, who with Ching K'o (tried to) stab the King of Ch'in, was his grandson."

There is no doubt that the *Shih Chi*'s reading here of his name as Wu 舞 is a mistake for Wu 武. The latter reading is found in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*; at the end of ch. 20 of the *Ch'ien Han Shu*; in the *Feng-su T'ung-i* (chüan 2, p. 7b of the Ssü Pu Ts'ung K'an ed.); and in the *Yen Tan-t'z'u*. (These last two works will be referred to below in the discussion.)

⁵⁴ Taking 治 as 留, according to the reading in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*.

⁵⁵ This sentence is omitted in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*.

⁵⁶ White is the Chinese mourning color. The river I constituted Yen's southern boundary.

to the god of the roads,⁵⁷ they took the highway. While Kao Chien-li played the lute, Ching K'o joined with him in a song in the tone of *p'ien-chih*,⁵⁸ and all the gentlemen shed tears and wept.

Once more moving forward, he sang a song which said:

"The wind sighs softly;
On the river I 'tis cold.
Once our young hero has gone,
He will never return."⁵⁹

Then he sang again, a stirring song in the tone of *yü*.⁶⁰ All the gentlemen assumed a stern gaze and their hair bristled up against their caps. At this point Ching K'o went to his carriage and departed; unto the end he did not look back.

When he arrived in Ch'in,⁶¹ he took goods worth one thousand (catties of) gold, and made lavish presents of them to Meng Chia, who was one of the favored ministers of the King of Ch'in, and was an attendant of (the heir apparent).⁶² (Meng) Chia went on his behalf to speak first to the King of Ch'in, saying: "Verily, the King of Yen trembles with terror before the majesty of the Great King. He dares not raise soldiers to oppose your military officers, but wishes, taking his kingdom, to become your inner vassal; to set an example to the other feudal lords; to send in tribute like one of your own commanderies or prefectures; and so be allowed to sacrifice to and preserve the temple of his ancestor kings. Being fearful, he dares not present himself, but has cut off the head of Fan Yü-ch'i and placed it in a closed box, together with a map of (the territory of) Tu-k'ang in Yen, which he respectfully presents. The King of Yen, making obeisance, has sent these to the court, and has dispatched

⁵⁷ *Tsu* 祖.

⁵⁸ The fourth note, corresponding to F#, in the ancient Chinese seven-note scale, which was derived from the earlier five-note scale by adding two intermediate notes, and was as follows: *kung* 宮, *shang* 商, *chia* 角, *p'ien-chih*

變徵, *chih* 徵, *yü* 羽, *p'ien-kung* 變宮. See John Hazard Levi, *Foundations of Chinese Musical Art* (Peiping, 1933), pp. 68-69, 91.

⁵⁹ *Feng hsiao hsiao hsi*, 風蕭蕭兮,
I shui han, 易水寒.
Chuang shih i ch'ü hsi, 壯士一去兮,
Pu fu huan, 不復還.

⁶⁰ Sixth in the seven note scale, corresponding to A. See footnote 58.

⁶¹ Which was in 227 B. C., according to *Mém. hist.*, II, 120.

⁶² Though not mentioned elsewhere, Meng Chia was no doubt a member of the Meng family, which played such an important role in Ch'in, and which is described in detail in the following biography.

an emissary to give news of them to the Great King. May the Great King but command him."

On hearing this, the King of Ch'in was greatly delighted. He put on court clothing as for a great state occasion,⁶³ and gave the Yen emissary an audience in the palace at Hsien-yang.

Ching K'o approached to present the box with the head of Fan Yu-ch'i, followed by Ch'in Wu-yang, presenting the container with the map. When they came to the steps of the throne, Ch'in Wu-yang changed color and shook with fear. The courtiers wondered at this. Ching K'o looked at him with a smile and went forward to excuse him, saying: "He is a common man of the northern barbarians, and has never seen the Son of Heaven. Therefore he shakes with fear. May it please the Great King to excuse him for a little and allow me, his humble emissary, to come forward."

The King of Ch'in said to (Ching) K'o: "Bring the map carried by (Ch'in) Wu-yang." (Ching) K'o thereupon brought the map and presented it. The King of Ch'in took out the map, and when it was entirely (exposed), the dagger appeared. (At this moment Ching K'o) seized the sleeve of the King of Ch'in with his left hand, while with his right hand he grasped the dagger and struck at him. But it did not reach his body. The King of Ch'in, alarmed, drew himself back and leaped up, so that his sleeve tore off. He pulled at his sword, but the sword
5a was long and clung to its scabbard. By this time he was completely terrified. The sword (hung) vertically, and therefore he could not draw it out immediately.⁶⁴ Ching K'o pursued the King of Ch'in, who ran around a pillar. All the courtiers, thunderstruck, hurriedly jumped up without thought and completely lost their ranks.

According to the Ch'in laws, none of the courtiers who attended court in the hall above was allowed to bear any kind of a weapon.⁶⁵ The officers of the guard in charge of the soldiers were all ranged in the hall below, and unless there was a summons they were not allowed to come up. At this moment of emergency, there was no time to call for the soldiers below. Thus Ching K'o pursued the King of Ch'in, while the latter, in a state of complete panic, having nothing with which to strike (Ching) K'o, warded him off with his two joined hands.

⁶³ Lit., for the "nine guests" (*chiu pin* 九賓), who were originally the nine classes of nobles and officers who assembled at special times at the court of the Chou dynasty. But here, according to Chang Shou-chieh, the expression merely means that everything was prepared as for a great state occasion.

⁶⁴ I take 堅 (hard) as equivalent to 豎 (vertical). The meaning is that the sword was so long that when it hung at his side, he had no room to draw it out.

⁶⁵ Lit., "a foot or an inch of weapon."

At this moment an attendant physician, Hsia Wu-chü, struck Ching K'o a blow with his bag of medicine which he was to have presented. The King of Ch'in was running around and around the pillar, and had completely lost his wits, so that he did not know what he was doing. The bystanders then cried out: "Put your sword behind you, King!"

(The King) did so, and thus (had room) to pull it out. He struck Ching K'o with it and cut his left thigh. Ching K'o, being disabled, then raised his dagger and hurled it at the King of Ch'in. It missed him and hit the bronze pillar. The King of Ch'in struck at (Ching) K'o repeatedly, so that the latter received eight wounds.

(Ching) K'o realized that his attempt had failed. He leaned against the pillar and laughed; then squatting down, he cursed the King, saying: "The reason why my attempt did not succeed was because I wished to carry him off alive. (Someone else) must be found (to carry out) the pledge to avenge the Crown Prince." At this point those about him rushed forward and killed (Ching) K'o.⁹⁶

The King of Ch'in was not at ease (after this) for a long time. Later he decided which of the courtiers should be rewarded for their merit, and which punished, each according to his degree. Hsia Wu-chü he rewarded with two hundred *i* of yellow gold,⁹⁷ saying: "Wu-chü loves me. With his bag of medicine he struck Ching K'o."

Then the King of Ch'in was greatly enraged. He sent more soldiers to advance on Chao, and commanded the army of Wang Chien to attack Yen. In the tenth month it seized the city of Chi.⁹⁸ King Hsi of Yen, Crown Prince Tan, and their followers, all led their best soldiers eastward to defend themselves at Liao-tung.⁹⁹ The Ch'in general, Li Hsin, pursued and attacked the King of Yen impetuously.]¹⁰

King Chia of Tai¹¹ then sent King Hsi of Yen a letter which said: "The reason why Ch'in continues to press Yen so impetuously is because of Crown Prince Tan. If now the King would actually kill Tan and

⁹⁶ These last words of Ching K'o seem rather inconsequential. Moreover, it is peculiar that nothing is said of Ch'in Wu-yang during this time. We must suppose that as he had not been armed, he was seized by someone during the commotion and thus prevented from helping Ching K'o.

⁹⁷ An *i* (鎰 or 鎰) is equal to twenty-four ounces.

⁹⁸ North of the present Wan-p'ing 宛平 hsien, which is a little southwest of Peiping.

⁹⁹ At the present promontory of the same name, a little west of Korea.

¹⁰ The *Chan Kuo Ts'z* diverges and abbreviates at this point.

¹¹ The son of the last King of Chao. The latter had been captured by Ch'in in 228, following which event, his son fled to Tai, where he ruled from 227 until he was in his turn wiped out by Ch'in in 222. Tai was a small territory in the present Yu 蔚 heien in southern Chahar.

give him up to the King of Ch'in, the King of Ch'in would surely desist and your spirits of the soil and grain would happily have their sacrifices."⁷²

Li Hsin later pursued Tan, who concealed himself at the river Yen.⁷³ The King of Yen then sent an official who beheaded Crown Prince Tan, wishing to give him up to Ch'in.⁷⁴

[Ch'in again sent in soldiers to attack him, and five years later Ch'in completely wiped out Yen and made King Hsi of Yen captive.⁷⁵ The next year (the King of) Ch'in unified the world] and established for himself the title of Sovereign Emperor.⁷⁶

After this, Ch'in pursued the followers of Crown Prince Tan and of Ching K'o, so that they all disappeared. Kao Chien-li changed his personal name and his surname, and became a servant.⁷⁷ He lived in concealment at Sung-tzū⁷⁸ and for a long time endured much hardship. Once he heard the honored guests of the household playing the lute. He moved about irresolutely and could not go away, and about each of them he expressed his opinion, saying that such and such a person was good or not good. The servants told their master, saying: "That fellow knows music. He takes the liberty of saying what is right and what is wrong." The master of the house summoned him and had him come forward and play the lute. The entire gathering acclaimed his excellence, and rewarded him with wine.

Kao Chien-li, reflecting that he had long been in retirement, and fearing lest his straitened circumstances might continue for an interminable time, withdrew himself and took out from his luggage box his lute and his good clothes. Then having changed his appearance, he came forward. The entire assemblage of guests was surprised. They descended to give him the honors of an equal, made him an honored guest, and had him play the lute and sing. Then among the guests there was not

⁷² Each state in ancient China was presided over by its own deities of the soil and grain, which could be sacrificed to only by the ruling house. Thus the cessation of such sacrifice was synonymous with the extinction of the state.

⁷³ A river which flows from near Mukden, in Manchuria, into the gulf of Liaotung, and is now known, probably after this event, as the T'ai-tzū 太子 or Crown Prince river.

⁷⁴ All these events happened in 226 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 120-121.

⁷⁵ This was in 222 B. C. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 122. The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* momentarily resumes its account at this point.

⁷⁶ *Huang-ti* 皇帝. For the meaning of this title, see *China's First Unifier*, ch. 6, especially p. 130. The *Chan Kuo Ts'e* finally stops at this bracket, save for two or three sentences which summarize the events described below.

⁷⁷ *Yung pao* 庸保. For the meaning of this term, see the *Ts'ü Yüan*, loc. cit.

⁷⁸ Twenty-five li north of the present Chao 趙 hsien, Hopel, west of the Peiping-Hankow railway.

one who did not shed tears on departing. (After this the people of) Sung-tzu one after another received him as a guest.

The report of this came to the First Emperor of Ch'in, who summoned him for an audience. Someone who was there recognized him and said that he was Kao Chien-li. But the First Emperor of Ch'in pitied him for his excellent playing of the lute, and found it difficult to kill him.⁷⁹ So he had him blinded and employed him to play the lute. Never was there a time when he did not acclaim his excellence, and little by little he became more familiar with him. Kao Chien-li then put some lead
5b inside his lute, and when next he entered and came close, he raised the lute and struck at the First Emperor of Ch'in. But he missed. Thereupon (the Emperor) had Kao Chien-li put to death, and for the rest of his life he did not again allow followers of the feudal lords to come close to him.

Lu Kou-chien, having heard of Ching K'o's (attempt) to stab the King of Ch'in, privately exclaimed: "Alas! What a pity that I did not discuss with him the arts of swordmanship. How little do I know men! Once I reviled him, and now he has made a mere nobody out of me."⁸⁰

The Great Astrologer Duke says:

"People of the world say that when Ching K'o undertook the mission of Crown Prince Tan, Heaven rained grain and horses sprouted horns. These are great errors.⁸¹ They also say that Ching K'o wounded the King of Ch'in. This is all wrong. Kung-sun Chi-kung and Tung Sheng were at one time associates of Hsia Wu-chü,⁸² and they both knew about the matter. They have told it to me as it is here. As for the five men from Ts'ao Mo down to Ching K'o,⁸³ sometimes they succeeded in their

⁷⁹ Taking 赦 (to pardon) as a mistake for 殺 (to kill), which is the reading in some texts, and also occurs in the *Feng-su T'ung-i* (chüan 6, p. 9b), where this passage is quoted.

⁸⁰ Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武 (1613-1682) points out how frequently Ssu-ma Ch'ien, as here, narrates a certain event at the beginning of a chapter, and then knits up the chapter by a brief reference to this event at the end. Thus this is the case in chs. 30 (On Commerce), 73 (Biography of Wang Chien), 101 (Biography of Ch'ao Ts'o, 韜錯), and 107 (Biography of T'ien Fen 田蚡).

⁸¹ The *Feng-su T'ung-i* (chüan 2, p. 7) makes this statement, and Wang Ch'ung, in his *Lun Heng* (Forke's translation, I, 295-296), also speaks of "Prince Tan, who is believed to have ordered the sun to return to the meridian, and Heaven to rain grain." The *Lun Heng* (Forke, I, 297) further says that "a white halo encircled the sun when Ching K'o (tried to) stab the King of Ch'in." These and other traditions, such as are found in the *Yen Tan-tzu*, are discussed below on pp. 42-44.

⁸² The physician who struck Ching K'o with his medicine bag. Kung-sun Chi-kung and Tung Sheng seem to be unknown elsewhere.

⁸³ The five men treated in this chapter on assassins. For Ts'ao Mo, the first of them, see p. 29, note 42.

intentions and sometimes they did not, but the ideas which they based themselves on are clear. They did not betray their resolve, and their names have come down to later generations. How can they have been in vain!"

DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT

As much as the preceding biography is sordid and mean, so is the present one noble and heroic. Its story of the brave but futile struggle against Ch'in takes on an almost epic quality as we read of how first the old gentleman, T'ien Kuang, then the refugee Ch'in general, Fan Yü-ch'i, then Ching K'o, then Crown Prince Tan, and finally Ching K'o's friend, Kao Chien-li, are all vainly sacrificed to the oncoming might of Ch'in. Perhaps it is the very inevitability of the final end, against which even the most heroic efforts are for naught, that moves us mostly deeply. Certainly this inevitability forms the undertone to that magnificent scene in which Ching K'o, escorted by his friends in funeral dress, sings first with sorrow and then with martial determination, after which without so much as a single look behind him, he departs on the desperate mission from which we already realize that he will never return.

We to-day, looking back over those troubled times with the cool detachment of the historian, can see the Ch'in conquest of China, with its abolition of feudalism, as necessary steps in China's progress toward a later glorious maturity. We can recognize that the ideas for which Ching K'o and his friends were struggling were after all nothing more than those of an outworn feudal society, based on a narrow local patriotism and the unquestioning obedience of inferior to superior.

The government of the Ch'in dynasty, nevertheless, was certainly a hateful one, harsher than anything that had been known in China before its time, and one which functioned only through the ruthless suppression of the rights of the individual in the interests of the state. Yet its creation of a unified empire did, in some ways, represent an advance over the groups of warring feudal states that it replaced; while its very harshness, though it led to its early overthrow, was at the same time necessary in order to lay the foundations for the more benevolent rule of the following Han dynasty. No doubt, therefore, it is better that China followed the road she did. In any case it is unlikely that Ching K'o's attempt, even if successful, could long have halted the course of history.

Yet to those men themselves, their efforts must have seemed like a last desperate struggle for personal freedom and independence, made against a cruel, inhuman government that was rolling like a juggernaut across all prostrate China. And we of the modern world, for whom these principles are even yet by no means assured, cannot but read of the deaths of those men with sorrowing compassion.

Ching K'ò, the central figure in this tragedy, is presented in an extremely interesting way. Though skilled with the sword and a lover of wine, he was at the same time a man who liked to read books, was faithful to his friends, and esteemed by those who knew him. Unlike such blustering bullies as Ko Nieh and Lu Kou-chien, with whom he is contrasted at the beginning of the biography, he was a reasonable and conciliatory man, ready in small matters to avoid all trouble, even though by so doing he might seem to play the coward. But when a really important ideal was at stake, so heroically did he act that even Lu Kou-chien was in the end forced to admit that "now he has made a mere nobody out of me." Ching K'ò, in short, represents the ideal example of Chinese martial hero. Physical bravery, for the Chinese, is of little account if it is not coupled with an inner moral strength. A man who has only physical courage alone will remain nothing more than a braggart. To be a true hero he must at the same time possess culture, strength of character, a gentle calm and evenness of temper.¹

Ching K'ò's biography, fortunately for the reader, is almost entirely free from the textual and historical difficulties which make the biography of Lü Pu-wei so puzzling. For the greater part (pp. 25-35), it is a direct copy of the account in the *Chan Kuo Ts'è*.² Nevertheless, it is extremely interesting to see how by what slight additions and changes, the author of the *Shih Chi* has succeeded in improving upon his original source.

The *Chan Kuo Ts'è*, for example, opens its account by saying: "Crown Prince Tan of Yen, who had been a hostage in Ch'in, fled back (to Yen). He saw that Ch'in, moreover, was destroying the Six States, and that with its armies it would (soon) overlook the river I. Fearing that disaster from it would overtake (Yen), Crown Prince Tan was worried, and said to his tutor, Ohtü Wu: 'Yen and Ch'in cannot both stand. I should like you please to think about this.'"

The *Shih Chi* omits this blunt and matter-of-fact introduction entirely, and in its place describes Ching K'ò's encounters with the two bullies, Ko Nieh and Lu Kou-chien, as well as his later friendship with Kao Chien-li and the "dog butcher" of Yen; all incidents which help us greatly to understand his character. Similarly, the *Shih Chi* does not end its story with Ch'in's annexation of the state of Yen,³ but continues with a detailed account of the blinded Kao Chien-li's pathetic attempt to avenge his dead friend, which in the *Chan Kuo Ts'è* is only alluded to in two or three short sentences. And finally, at the very end, the author of the *Shih Chi*

¹ See the interesting comparison between the two types of bravery in *Mencius*, IIa, 2, iv-vii.

² *Yen Ts'è*, III, 5.

³ See p. 36.

knits the entire story into an ordered whole by quoting a comment made by one of its opening characters, Lu Kou-chien. I have already pointed out how this is a literary device which Ssü-ma Ch'ien has used fairly frequently in his history.⁴

Even in the major portion of the story, where the biography and the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* are for the most part identical, there are several places in which Ssü-ma Ch'ien has added or changed the text solely for reasons of literary improvement. Thus the biography (p. 25) records Chü Wu as saying to Crown Prince Tan: "In the north it [Ch'in] possesses the fortifications of Kan-ch'üan and Ku-k'ou. In the south it has the irrigation of the Ching and the Wei. It has seized for itself the riches of Pa and Han. On its right are the mountains of Lung and Shu, and on the left are the defiles of Kuan and Hsiao." And so on, for two more sentences.

The *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* gives only the opening and closing sentences of Chü Wu's speech, and omits entirely this central passage, which has obviously been added by Ssü-ma Ch'ien for literary effect. Further proof that such is the case, if any were needed, is provided by the fact that it is clearly derived from another very similar passage in a speech which was supposedly made by the noted Ch'in general, Fan Sui 范雎, to the King of Ch'in in the year 271: "The state of the Great King has four passes for its defense. In the north it possesses Kan-ch'üan and Ku-k'ou. In the south it is girdled by the Ching and the Wei. On the right are Lung and Shu. On the left are Kuan and Fan."

The *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*, again, gives only the last sentence of the flowery speech of Chü Wu which appears on p. 27 of the biography, and which begins: "To move into danger thereby wishing to gain peace," etc. Likewise, the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* omits the sentence in the biography (p. 32): "Who is this you would send?" And finally, the two paragraphs on pp. 35-36 of the biography, which begin, "King Chia of Tai then sent King Hsi of Yen a letter," are compressed by the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê* into two short sentences.

The biography (p. 25), on the other hand, omits Crown Prince Tan's opening words to Chü Wu, which the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*⁵ records as: "Yen and Ch'in cannot both stand. I should like you please to think about this." Once more the change is made entirely because of literary considerations; in this case in order to avoid the repetition that would otherwise occur between these words and the almost identical words which

⁴ See p. 37, note 30.

⁵ See his biography in the *Shih Chi*, ch. 79, p. 2b.

⁶ See above, p. 39.

appear in a later speech of Crown Prince Tan to Chü Wu, which is found on p. 28 of the biography.

All these facts prove conclusively that when speeches of this kind occur in the biographies of the *Shih Chi*, they cannot be accepted as anything more than literary embroideries. This fact has already been pointed out in the critical analysis of Li Ssü's biography which appears in *China's First Unifier*, and there will be occasion to allude to it later on in the discussion of the biography of Meng T'ien.

The fact that such speeches are embroideries, however, is no reason for rejecting the basic historical facts around which they are woven. Nor should they be held to include throne memorials, imperial decrees, or speeches delivered on important public occasions, all of which, even if they were made orally, were almost certainly reduced to writing at the time they were given, and so have been preserved in their original form.

In the case of the present biography, the authenticity of its main facts is vouched for not only by the agreement between the *Chan Kuo Ts'e* and the *Shih Chi*, but, at least as far as the actual assassination attempt is concerned, by Ssü-ma Ch'ien's statement in his general summary at the end of the biography: "Kung-sun Chi-kung and Tung Sheng were at one time associates of Hsia Wu-chü [an actual eyewitness of the attempt], and they both knew about the matter. They have told it to me as it is here."

This statement is furthermore important because it throws interesting light on the question of the authorship of the *Shih Chi*. For the sake of convenience, the *Shih Chi* is usually spoken of as having been compiled by Ssü-ma Ch'ien alone, but in actual fact he was merely the continuator and completer of a work which had been commenced by his father, Ssü-ma T'an. Unfortunately, it has in most cases been impossible to determine which part of the *Shih Chi* should be attributed to Ssü-ma Ch'ien, and which part to Ssü-ma T'an. In the present case, however, the above statement gives clear proof that the biography of Ching K'ö could only have been written by Ssü-ma T'an himself, and hence existed in complete form (save, possibly, for minor corrections and alterations) when Ssü-ma Ch'ien continued his father's work.

This is proved because Ching K'ö's attempted assassination of the First Emperor occurred, as we know, in 227 B. C.,⁷ whereas Ssü-ma Ch'ien was born in 145 B. C. Now if we suppose that Ssü-ma Ch'ien was eighteen when he first heard the story from Kung-sun Chi-kung and Tung Sheng, this would mean a date just one hundred years after the event took place, and it is practically impossible that any associates of Hsia Wu-chü could then have still been living.

⁷ See p. 33, note 61.

With Ssü-ma T'an, however, the case is different. We do not know his year of birth, but we do know that he died in 110 B. C., and so if we suppose that he was about seventy when he died, this would mean that he was born somewhere around the year 180. Supposing, once more, that he heard the Ching K'ò story when he was about twenty, i. e., around the year 160, this would be a date only sixty-seven years after the actual event. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Hsia Wu-chü was a fairly young man when the assassination attempt occurred (we might assume as much from the fact that he took an active part in defeating it), and so if Kung-sun Chi-kung and Tung Sheng were his associates of a younger generation, then it is quite possible that they were still living in the year 160. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the general summary at the end of the biography, and consequently in all probability the biography as a whole, can only have been written by Ssü-ma T'an and not by Ssü-ma Ch'ien.

Further evidence of the care with which Ssü-ma T'an wrote this biography is given by the way in which he rejects, in his concluding remarks, the tradition already current in his time that "when Ching K'ò undertook the mission of Crown Prince Tan, Heaven rained grain and horses sprouted horns." Ssü-ma Cheng (first half of eighth century A. D.), in his commentary under this passage, refers to similar traditions appearing in the *Lun Heng*, by Wang Ch'ung (A. D. 27-c. 100),⁸ and the *Feng-su T'ung-i*, by Ying Shao (fl. A. D. 178).⁹ He also quotes from another small work of uncertain date, known as the *Yen Tan-tzu* (Master Tan of Yen),¹⁰ which gives a highly romantic version of the Ching K'ò story, and still survives at the present time.¹¹ This work is not listed in the bibliography of the imperial Han library (compiled about the time of Christ), which forms the thirtieth chapter of the *Ch'ien Han Shu* (History of the Former Han Dynasty). It first appears in the bibliographical chapter in the history of the Sui dynasty (A. D. 589-618),¹² where its authorship is attributed, wrongly, of course, to Crown Prince Tan. It seems to have been lost some time during the Ming dynasty, for it does not appear in the history of that dynasty, but it has since been re-collected from various sources, and is published in several editions.

⁸ 論衡, by 王充.

⁹ 風俗通義, by 應劭. See on these traditions, p. 37, note 81.

¹⁰ 燕丹子. Also sometimes entitled the *Yen T'ai-tzu* 燕太子 (The Crown Prince of Yen).

¹¹ It is published, for example, in 3 *chüan* in the Ssu Pu Pei Yao edition of the Chung Hua Book Co.

¹² *Sui Shu*, ch. 84, p. 3b, under the section on *hsiao shuo* 小說.

There is no need to give any extended notice to this comparatively late work, which really has only a very tenuous connection with the Ching K'ò biography. In order to give some idea of its contents, however, it may be of interest to translate five excerpts from it which are quoted, usually slightly abbreviated, by the *Shih Chi* commentators in various parts of the biography:

(1) Quoted by Chang Shou-chieh at the end of T'ien Kuang's speech to Crown Prince Tan (biography, p. 27):

"T'ien Kuang replied: 'From what I have seen of the pensioners of the Crown Prince, there is not one who can be employed (on the mission to Ch'in). Hsia-fu 夏扶 is a man of courageous blood, and when he becomes angry, his face becomes red. Sung-i 宋意 is a man of courageous arteries, and when he becomes angry, his face becomes green. (Ch'in) Wu-yang is a man of courageous bones, and when he becomes angry, his face becomes white. But from what I know, Ching K'ò is a man of courageous spirit, and when he becomes angry, his color does not change at all.'"

(2) Quoted by Ssü-ma Cheng at the end of the description of how the Crown Prince entertained Ching K'ò before sending him off to Ch'in (biography, p. 30):

"(Ching) K'ò went with the Crown Prince to the pool of the eastern palace. (Ching) K'ò picked up a tile and threw it at a tortoise. (Thereupon) the Crown Prince gave him a ball of gold (to throw at the tortoise).

"They then rode together on 'thousand *li* horses.'¹ (Ching) K'ò said: 'The liver of a thousand *li* horse is a fine thing.' (The Crown Prince) thereupon killed the horse and gave him its liver.

"While the Crown Prince was drinking wine with General Fan at the Hua-yang pavillion, he sent forward a beautiful woman who was skilled at playing the lute. (Ching) K'ò said: 'She has skilful hands.' (The Crown Prince) had them cut off and placed them in a jade platter. (Ching) K'ò said: 'The Crown Prince has entertained me most lavishly.'"

(3) Quoted by Chang Shou-chieh at the end of the sentence describing how the King of Ch'in, when attacked by Ching K'ò, tried in vain to draw out his sword (biography, p. 34):

"With his left hand, (Ching K'ò) struck at his bosom. The King of Ch'in said: 'To-day's events are the result of your plot. I beg to die

¹ I. e., horses supposed to be able to go 1,000 *li* (more than 300 miles) in a day.

listening to the lute.' He summoned a female attendant to play the lute, and the words of her song were:

'A thin robe of silk gauze may be torn and broken.

An eight-foot wind-screen may be jumped over and crossed.

A "deer date" sword¹⁴ may be placed at one's back and seized.'

"At this the King snatched away his sleeve, leaped over the wind-screen, and ran off."

(This story is not quite so ridiculous in the original *Yen Tan-tzu* as it sounds here, for at the end of the song the *Yen Tan-tzu* adds the words: "Ching K'ô did not understand the air." This, of course, was because he did not understand the local Ch'in dialect in which it was sung.)

(4) Quoted by Chang Shou-chieh three paragraphs lower down (p. 35), under the passage describing how Ching K'ô, after being wounded, hurled his dagger in desperation at the First Emperor:

"Ching K'ô seized his dagger and hurled it at the King of Ch'in. It penetrated the bronze pillar up to its very handle,¹⁵ and sparks flew forth."¹⁶

(5) Quoted by Ssü-ma Ch'eng under the passage at the end of the biography (p. 37), referring to the tradition that Heaven rained grain and horses sprouted horns:

"Tan of Yen sought to return (to Yen). The King of Ch'in said: 'When the heads of crows are white and horses grow horns, I shall consent.' Tan thereupon gazed up to Heaven and groaned. At this the heads of the crows became white and the horses also grew horns."

These excerpts suffice to indicate the fantastic extent to which the Ching K'ô legend developed in later times. They stand in startling contrast to the soberness and carefulness with which Ssü-ma T'an narrates the same story; qualities which are usually conspicuous in the *Shih Chi* as compared with some of the other writings of the time.

Until now we have been considering the biography chiefly as a literary piece of work, and as an example of the methods used by Ssü-ma T'an and Ssü-ma Ch'ien in the compilation of their history. Another aspect

¹⁴ *Lu lu* 鹿盧, the name of a species of date tree. This was the name of a kind of sword whose point was shaped like this kind of date. See the *T'zu Yüan*, under this term.

¹⁵ Lit., "ear."

¹⁶ The same story is repeated in the *Lun Heng* (Forke's translation, III, 112), where it is ridiculed as an exaggeration.

which is of great interest, however, is the vivid picture which it presents of the important part played by music in the cultural life of ancient China. We know from other sources that at least as early as the third century B. C., elaborate philosophic theories had been developed about music; theories which tried to explain its function on ethical lines, as that of expressing and at the same time controlling human emotion, and also as being the concrete exemplification in the human world of the natural harmony obtaining in the universe.¹⁷

The high degree of development to which music must have attained at this time is abundantly indicated from the biography, a very interesting passage of which is that on p. 33, describing how Ching K'ò, accompanied on the lute by Kao Chien-li, first sang a song in the tone of *pien-chih* 變徵 (identified as F#), whereupon all the gentlemen who were with him shed tears and wept, and then sang a stirring song in the tone of *Yü* 羽 (identified as A), upon which "all the gentlemen assumed a stern gaze and their hair bristled up against their caps."¹⁸ I do not know enough about music to judge whether the word "tone" (*sheng* 聲) used in the text can be interpreted as meaning that these two songs were sung in the *keys* of F# and A respectively, though the hypothesis seems a very probable one. It is a great pity that so little has heretofore been done toward the study of ancient Chinese music, as such a study would undoubtedly yield some very interesting results.

One further point of considerable interest in the biography is the passage (p. 34) which describes how, when Ching K'ò made his onslaught on the future First Emperor, the latter, alarmed, "pulled at his sword, but the sword was long and clung to its scabbard. . . . The sword (hung) vertically, and therefore he could not draw it out immediately." In a footnote I have interpreted this statement as meaning that the sword was of such a length that, when it hung at the Emperor's side, he had no room to draw it out.

I am indebted to Dr. Carl W. Bishop, of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., for the interesting suggestion that this sword of the First Emperor may not, like most of the swords of the China of that time, have been made of bronzo, but must have been made of iron. Otherwise, according to Dr. Bishop, a bronze sword, in order to be as long as this, would also have to be so thick and heavy that it could be of little practical value. If such a hypothesis can be proved, then this passage, referring to events of the year 227 B. C., is one of the earliest references we have to the use of the iron sword in China.

¹⁷ See Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Bodde's translation, I, 341-344.

¹⁸ For the identification of these notes, see p. 33, footnotes 58 and 60.

The most complete study that has been made of swords in ancient China is that by Olov Janse, entitled "Notes sur quelques épées anciennes trouvées en Chine," which appeared in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 2, 1930, pp. 67-176. On pp. 107-130 of this article, Mr. Janse lists and describes a total of ninety-nine Chinese swords of early date, the great majority of which are bronze, but four of which are made of iron.¹⁹ Two of the latter (nos. 62 and 88) are comparatively short, having lengths of only 62.7 and 55.5 cms. respectively. The other two (nos. 71 and 94) are exceedingly long, however, with lengths of 97.6 and 97 cms. respectively. None of the bronze swords described by Mr. Janse attains to anything like such a length, and only two are more than 80 cms. long, these being no. 64 (83.2 cms.) and no. 95 (86.4 cms.). This striking disparity between Mr. Janse's iron and bronze weapons suggests at once that the unusually long sword worn by the First Emperor must also have been an iron one.

Such a conclusion is strongly confirmed by Laufer's work, entitled *Chinese Clay Figures*, in which two iron swords are illustrated.²⁰ The first of these swords has the extraordinary length of 117.6 cms., and the other is almost equally long, being 114.3 cms. Both swords are said by Laufer to belong to the Han dynasty, and he further states that iron swords began to be used in China only during this dynasty, not completely supplanting bronze swords until the Later Han period (A. D. 25-220).²¹ Mr. Janse, however, would place the general use of iron swords in China at a slightly earlier date, for he states that in north China, at least, they became widespread by the first century B. C.²² (Iron itself, of course, was known in China long before this time, but it does not seem to have been applied to swords until a comparatively late date.)

Of the two long iron swords listed by Mr. Janse, no. 73 belongs to a type which he describes as having a tongue, i. e., a narrow prolongation of the blade, over which a handle of some other kind of material was originally fitted. This type (of which he gives both bronze and iron examples), in his opinion comes from a region embracing north central China (Honan) and northern China (including the Ordos region). In bronze form, at least, it entered into general use by the time of the Ch'in

¹⁹ See *loc. cit.*, nos. 62 (illustrated on Plate XII, 3); 71 (Plate XV, 2); 88 (Plate XIV, 6); and 94 (Plate XV, 7).

²⁰ Berthold Laufer, *Chinese Clay Figures, Part I, Prolegomena on the History of Defensive Armour* (Chicago, 1914), Plate XXI, nos. 3 and 4. Laufer states that these swords were of cast iron, but Professor Thomas T. Read, of Columbia University, who has analysed them, states (personal letter of July 23, 1939) that they are "ordinary hardened wrought iron of rather poor quality."

²¹ Laufer, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

²² See Janse, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

dynasty. Stylistically, it seems to bear considerable resemblance to certain types of swords to be found in northern Europe. Its prototype, however, probably did not originate in northern Europe, but rather in some region in western Asia, perhaps Persia, from which it spread both westward toward Europe and eastward toward China.²³ This hypothesis of a western origin, indeed, seems to be confirmed by the occurrence of this type of sword in the Ordos, where it could easily have been brought to the Chinese from a western source through the intermediary of the nomadic Huns.

As for Mr. Janse's other long iron sword, no. 94, it has a single edged, slightly curved blade, and belongs to a group of sabre-like swords, of which he illustrates examples both in bronze and in iron. The provenance of this type is uncertain, but it seems to be a little later than the style of no. 73, and belongs probably to the Han dynasty. Several pictorial representations of such sabres are to be found among the stone bas reliefs of the tomb chambers of the Han dynasty.²⁴

It is interesting that Ching K'ò's attempt to assassinate the First Emperor is portrayed no less than three times on these same tomb reliefs.²⁵ When we come to examine these reliefs, however, it is disappointing to find that on none of them is the sword of the First Emperor portrayed in such a way that one may gain any definite information as to its appearance. Nevertheless, it is tempting to suggest that this sword of the First Emperor may have belonged to the first of Mr. Janse's two groups described above, that of the tongued swords; a group which, as we have just seen, dates in bronze form, at least, as far back as the Ch'in dynasty and probably stems from a western Asiatic source.

In this connection, it is of some significance that the long sword mentioned in the Ching K'ò biography (which, if it really was of iron, is one of the earliest evidences for iron swords in China), should also be given a western provenance, namely the state of Ch'in. This state, together with the more northern one of Chao, had for centuries been in constant contact with the nomadic Huns who repeatedly ravaged its borders, and it is very probable that through them it received many cultural elements of western origin. Among these new elements, those pertaining to warfare seem to have been of especial importance. Thus the state of Chao, as we know, was the first of the Chinese feudal states to learn from the nomads the use of cavalry archers in place of the clumsy war chariots which had formerly been employed. Such new methods of warfare were

²³ See Janse, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 and 99.

²⁴ See Janse, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 and 104.

²⁵ See below, p. 51, note 37.

eagerly adopted by the progressive state of Ch'in, and contributed in no small measure to the success of the final conquest by Ch'in over the rest of China in 221.

Among these new cultural elements that China thus received from the West, iron itself may quite possibly have been included, if we may judge from the time lag existing between the earliest use of iron in western Asia and its first appearance in China. And if this be so, it is not implausible that the Chinese iron sword, as well as other iron weapons, may also be of western origin.

On the other hand, attempts have not been lacking to prove that the use of iron weapons in China originated, not in western China, but in what was the southern China of that time, that is, the Yangtze valley.²⁶ The chief evidence for this hypothesis is a passage in the *Hsün-tzu* which states: "The men of Ch'u use . . . hard iron spears (*chü t'ieh shih* 鉅鐵鉞) from Yüan, sharp as a bee's sting."²⁷ This passage is immediately followed by the mention of a battle which occurred in 301 B. C., and which would therefore date these "hard iron spears from Yüan" at least as early as this year.²⁸

In this connection it should be observed, first, that Yüan, which was located at the present Nan-yang hsien, Honan, was not, after all, very "southern," being almost midway between the Yangtze river to its south, and the Ch'in capital (near present Sian, Shensi) to its north-west; secondly, that the passage does not refer actually to swords made of iron, but only to spears (i. e., presumably spear heads) made of that metal. Yet on the other hand, the early date of 301 referred to is certainly significant when compared with the date of 227 in the Ching K'ö biography.

A hypothesis that might explain the whole problem is that the Chinese may first have obtained from the nomads to their west the original prototypes in iron for their own iron weapons, beginning (when iron was still rare and costly) with such small objects as spear heads and followed by larger and more complicated weapons, such as swords. Such iron prototypes, then, might be expected to appear first in such a state as Ch'in, which was in closest contact with these nomads.²⁹ Soon, however, the

²⁶ See Thomas T. Read, "Chinese Iron—a Puzzle," in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 2, 1937, p. 399.

²⁷ Ch. 15 (see translation of Dubs, p. 216, where Yüan 宛 is incorrectly romanized as Wan). See also Laufer, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²⁸ Dubs, *op. cit.*, p. 217, note 1.

²⁹ The *Shih Chi* (see quotation below, p. 49) mentions an iron club (*t'ieh oh'ui* 鐵椎), weighing 120 catties, which was used in eastern China, in what is now Honan, in the year 218 B. C., that is, less than ten years after Ching K'ö's attempt to assassinate the First Emperor. This fact need not interfere with the

large scale manufacture of weapons of superior steel (as opposed to those of ordinary iron) became centered more to the south, nearer the Yangtze valley. For it was there that abundant forests existed which could supply the large amounts of charcoal necessary, as Professor Read has already pointed out,³⁰ for making the tempered steel (the "hard iron" mentioned in the *Hsün-tzū* quotation given above), best suited for weapons. Such a hypothesis is advanced here only very tentatively, however, and is admittedly based on rather slender proof. In all probability we must wait for future archaeological research before we can solve what is at present a very baffling problem.

Turning back now from this long discussion on swords and iron, let us again direct our attention to Ching K'ò's biography, and see what was the historical significance of the events it describes. The First Emperor, as we know, roused many hatreds, and it is not surprising that several attempts were made against his life. In addition to those of Ching K'ò, made in 227, and of Kao Chien-li, made probably within two or three years after the Ch'in unification of 221, still a third attempt took place in the year 218.³¹ This was the one of Chang Liang 張良, a man who later played a prominent part in the founding of the Han dynasty, and whose biography tells the story of his attempt in some detail:³²

"When Ch'in destroyed (the state of) Han (in 230 B. C.), (Chang) Liang was young and had not yet entered the service of Han in an official capacity. At the sacking of Han, three hundred young male servants of (Chang) Liang's family met death and were left unburied. (Therefore), using the entire wealth of his family, (Chang Liang) sought for retainers who would assassinate the King of Ch'in and so avenge Han. The reason for this was that his grandfather and father had been ministers of Han during five generations (of Han rulers). . . . He obtained a strong man who made an iron club weighing one hundred and twenty catties. When the Emperor of Ch'in travelled to the east (of China in 218), (Chang) Liang with his retainers waited in ambush for him. They made an onslaught on the Emperor of Ch'in at Po-lang-sha,³³ but by mistake it was directed against (one of) the attendant car-

theory as to the western origin of iron weapons, however, because a club of this sort, like the spear heads just mentioned, would probably have been developed earlier than the more complex sword, and therefore would have had more time to spread from a western starting point into other parts of China.

³⁰ Read, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

³¹ See *Mém. Hist.*, II, 166-167.

³² See the *Shih Chi*, ch. 55, p. 1a. The same text, with one or two unimportant verbal changes, appears in the *Ch'ien Han Shu* (History of the Former Han Dynasty), ch. 40, p. 1a.

³³ 博狼沙, in the present Yang-wu 陽武 hsien, in Honan.

riages. The Emperor of Ch'in was greatly enraged, and had a wide search made throughout the empire so as to find the bandits. He was deeply uneasy on account of Chang Liang. (Chang) Liang thereupon changed his personal name and his surname, and went into hiding."

Though all three of these assassination attempts thus ended in failure, there is little doubt that they left a deep psychological impression on the First Emperor. His superstitious dread of death, his searches for the elixir of immortality, and his efforts to make himself appear as a semi-divine being—all these may well have been influenced by the attempts on his life,⁸⁴ and in their turn seem to have led indirectly to the weakening and ultimate downfall of the Ch'in dynasty.⁸⁵

ADDITIONAL NOTE

Since the above pages were written, Professor J. J. L. Duyvendak, in an article entitled "An Illustrated Battle-Account in the History of the Former Han Dynasty" (*T'oung pao*, 1939, pp. 249-264), has advanced a new and ingenious theory concerning the nature of historiography during the Han dynasty. Because this article mentions the *Shih Chi*'s chapter on assassins, and specifically refers to the biography of Ching K'ô as illustration, a brief discussion of its main conclusions may be in order here.

Much of Professor Duyvendak's theory centers around a description, to be found in the *Ch'ien Han Shu*, of an important military victory which had been gained by the Chinese in the year 36 B. C. over their inveterate enemies, the Huns. In the year following this battle, the *Ch'ien Han Shu* further mentions the existence of a certain picture, the subject of which, though not definitely known, seems to have been this same battle of 36 B. C. Basing himself on the reference to this picture, Professor Duyvendak has made a stylistic study of the above mentioned description of the battle, and has reached an interesting conclusion, namely that the description has not been based on a direct account of the battle itself, but has merely been derived at second hand from the picture which was made of this battle, presumably by an eyewitness. The *Ch'ien Han Shu* passage, in other words, is not an account of the actual battle, but a description of the picture (or, it may be, a series of connected pictures) which was painted portraying this battle.

Professor Duyvendak goes still further, and suggests that other passages in the histories written during the Han period may have been influenced by pictorial representations of this kind. Such influence, he

⁸⁴ See *China's First Unifier*, ch. 5, sect. 1, especially p. 119.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

thinks, may have been exerted not only in the case of records of recent or contemporary events, but also of those of events happening long prior to the Han dynasty, especially when such events contained picturesque episodes that would make a strong appeal to the imagination. His conclusion, in his own words, is that "under the former Han dynasty not only were portraits made of famous people and moral tales and legends illustrated, thus influencing the literary form which these stories took, even in the *Shih Chi* itself, but also . . . contemporary famous events were sometimes represented by paintings, and the literary description of these events was influenced by the pictorial representation. . . . This, I believe, throws a new light on Chinese historiography."⁸⁶ Professor Duyvendak further suggests that among the "famous people and moral tales and legends" thus illustrated, might be included such stories as those in the *Shih Chi*'s chapter on assassins, including the biography of Ching K'ö.

It would be beyond the scope of the present book to discuss the probability of this theory in any detail. Its correctness, in any case, can hardly be proved as long as our knowledge of the pictorial art of the Han dynasty is restricted to the bas reliefs which have been found chiefly in the tomb chambers in Shantung, and the few brick paintings and paintings on lacquer objects which have been excavated. Almost all of this material apparently dates from a time posterior to that when the *Shih Chi* was compiled, and therefore could not have influenced the *Shih Chi*.

As to the Ching K'ö biography, however, the theory must be definitely rejected in view of Ssü-ma T'ian's statement, already discussed, that "Kung-sun Chi-kung and Tung Sheng were at one time associates of Hsia Wu-chü, and they both knew about the matter. They have told it to me as it is here." This statement shows that Ssü-ma T'ian derived his information directly from persons who were acquainted with one of the principals in the affair, rather than from any later pictorial representation.

The force of the statement, to be sure, applies only to the assassination attempt itself, as it was only this attempt of which Hsia Wu-chü was a witness; it does not cover the earlier events leading up to the attempted assassination. Yet it is noteworthy that it is precisely this attempt, and not events preceding it, which is portrayed on the only surviving pictorial representations from the Han dynasty that we have dealing with Ching K'ö: the three reliefs of his attempt carved in stone about A. D. 150 on the walls of the Wu Liang Tomb in Shantung.⁸⁷ And this is

⁸⁶ Duyvendak, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁸⁷ See Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale* (Paris,

what we might normally expect, because the effort to stab the First Emperor forms the logical climax to the whole Ching K'ô story, and is naturally what would have appealed most strongly to the imagination of a Chinese artist of the Han dynasty.

It is also significant that, for the carver of these three tomb reliefs, it is the more exaggerated elements appearing in such a romance as the *Yen Tan-tzû*, and not Ssü-ma T'an's sober chronicle, that have provided inspiration. Thus a glance at the frontispiece of the present book (which differs but little from the other two reliefs), will show that the dagger hurled by Ching K'ô is represented as completely piercing the upright center pillar. This accords well with the *Yen Tan-tzû*'s flamboyant statement (see above, p. 44), that "Ching K'ô seized his dagger and hurled it at the King of Ch'in. It penetrated the bronze pillar up to its very handle, and sparks flew forth." It is far removed from the biography's cautious remark (see p. 85) that the dagger merely "hit the bronze pillar." That these reliefs should in this way follow legend rather than history, is not surprising in view of the large amount of legend that comprises their subject matter in general, and the same fantasy, we may reasonably suppose, was also probably the rule in much of the actual painting of the Han dynasty, which has since been lost.

Ssü-ma T'an's account of Ching K'ô, therefore, seems to be authenticated better than is usually the case with such biographies, and there is little likelihood that it could have been influenced by any pictorial representation.

III

THE BIOGRAPHY OF MENG TIEN

TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

- 1a The ancestors of Meng T'ien were natives of Ch'i. His grandfather, Meng Ao, came from Ch'i to serve under King Chao of Ch'in (306-251), and his office was advanced to that of High Dignitary.¹ In the first year of King Chuang-hsiang of Ch'in (250 B. C.), Meng Ao, as a Ch'in general, attacked Han, captured Ch'eng-kao² and Yung-yang,³ and established the commandery of San-ch'uan.⁴ In the second year (249), Meng Ao attacked Chao and captured thirty-seven cities.⁵ In the third year of the First Emperor (244), Meng Ao attacked Han and captured thirteen cities.⁶ In the fifth year (242), Meng Ao attacked Wei, captured twenty cities, and created the commandery of Tung.⁷ In the seventh year of the First Emperor (240), Meng Ao died.⁸

Ao's son was named Wu, and Wu's son was named T'ien. At one time (Meng) T'ien made a study of the writing of the prison statutes.

In the twenty-third year of the First Emperor (224), Meng Wu became Adjutant-General of Ch'in, and together with Wang Chien, attacked Ch'u and inflicted a great defeat on it, killing Hsiang Yen.⁹ In the twenty-fourth year (223), Meng Wu attacked Ch'u and took the King of Ch'u captive.¹⁰

The younger brother of Meng T'ien was I.

In the twenty-sixth year of the First Emperor (221), Meng T'ien, because his family had for generations been generals in Ch'in, (was sent to) attack Ch'i and inflicted a great defeat on it. (For this) he was conferred the office of Prefect of the Capital.¹¹

¹ *Shang ch'ing* 上卿

² A strategically important place northwest of the present Ssu-shui 汜水 hsien in Honan. See *Mém. hist.*, V, 222.

³ Seventeen li southwest of the present Yung-tse 滎澤 hsien in Honan. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 101, note 7.

⁴ Occupying the region halfway between Loyang and Kaifeng, Honan.

⁵ See *Mém. hist.*, II, 97.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 103-104.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 102.

⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 105.

⁹ A noted Ch'u general. For Wang Chien, see p. 29, note 35.

¹⁰ The *Shih Chi*'s ch. 6 records these events in the reverse order. According to it, the King of Ch'u was captured in the twenty-third year, while Hsiang Yen committed suicide in the twenty-fourth. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 121-122.

¹¹ *Nei shih* 內史, the official who had command over the troops at the capital. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 524. The sixth chapter (*Mém. hist.*, II, 122) speaks only of

After Ch'in had unified the world (in 221), Meng T'ien was sent to command a host of three hundred thousand to drive out the Jung and Ti along the north.¹² He took from them the territory to the south of the (Yellow) river, and built a Great Wall, constructing its defiles and passes in accordance with the configurations of the terrain. It started at Lin-t'ao¹³ and extended to Liao-tung,¹⁴ reaching a distance of more than ten thousand li.¹⁵ After crossing the (Yellow) river, it wound northward, touching Mount Yang.¹⁶

He camped his soldiers¹⁷ along the outer (borders) for more than ten years, staying at the commandery of Shang.¹⁸ During this time Meng T'ien awed and terrified the Huns.

The First Emperor greatly honored and favored the Meng family, trustfully employing and esteeming them. He made Meng I a close intimate, and advanced his position to that of High Dignitary. When (the Emperor) went out (from his palace), (Meng I) would be his chariot companion, and when (the Emperor) returned, he would remain in the imperial presence. (Meng) T'ien was employed in matters concerning the outer (borders), while (Meng) I constantly participated in the internal councils. They had the reputation of being loyal and honest, and therefore even among the generals or ministers, none dared to compete with them (for favor).

Chao Kao was a distant relative of the house of Chao.¹⁹ His several elder and younger brothers were all eunuchs.²⁰ His mother had suffered

Wang Pen 王賁 as attacking Ch'i and does not mention Meng T'ien; indeed, it seems a little improbable that the command of such an important expedition would then be in the hands of Meng T'ien, who at that time was probably still only a minor general.

¹² They were nomadic tribes of that time. The sixth chapter records under the year 215 what was probably the campaign referred to here, an expedition said to be directed against the Hu 胡 (a term applied generally to barbarian tribes). See *Mém. hist.*, II, 167.

¹³ In the present Min 岷 hsien, Kansu.

¹⁴ At the present peninsula of the same name, a little west of Korea.

¹⁵ The wall as it stands today is considerably shorter than this, about 1,800 miles long, but it is probable that in this case, as in many others, the expression "ten thousand li" is merely used in a general sense to mean a long distance.

¹⁶ A place on the northwest border of Suiyuan.

¹⁷ This is the meaning of the term *pao shih* 暴師. See the *Ts'ü Yüan*.

¹⁸ Occupying northern Shensi and extending into Suiyuan.

¹⁹ The ruling house in the state of the same name. Chao Kao himself was the notorious eunuch who, after the death of the First Emperor, through his intrigues brought about the downfall of the Ch'in dynasty.

²⁰ Lit., "born within the secret palace" (*sheng yin kung* 生隱宮), i. e., within the secluded quarters where the members of the harem and the eunuchs were

a shameful punishment, and for generation after generation (the family) had been mean and lowly.²¹

The King of Ch'in heard that (Chao) Kao had been applying himself with all his energy to a study of the penal laws, and he raised him to the position of Keeper of the Chariots. It was when (Chao) Kao was already privately giving his services to Prince Hu-hai,²² and instructing him how to decide criminal cases, that he himself committed a great crime. The King of Ch'in²³ ordered Meng I to judge him according to the law. (Meng) I, not daring to flout the law, condemned (Chao) Kao to death and stripped him of his office and rank. But because (Chao) Kao had been diligent in his work, the Emperor pardoned him and returned to him his office and rank.

The First Emperor wished to traverse the empire, (going) from Chiu-yüan²⁴ straight to Kan-ch'üan.²⁵ So he ordered Meng T'ien to open a road from Chiu-yüan to Kan-ch'üan.²⁶ (The latter) made cuts through

kept. From the *Shih Chi*, ch. 87, however, we know that Chao Kao himself could not have been a eunuch at once, since he had a son-in-law. See *China's First Unifier*, p. 53, note 3.

²¹ Ssu-ma Cheng quotes another commentator, Liu Po-chuang 劉伯莊 (fl. 627-650), as saying that Chao's mother, after her husband had been made a eunuch for some reason, was herself made a slave. She then had illicit relations with someone and bore several sons, all of whom assumed the name of Chao. They were in their turn made eunuchs. This sounds, however, very much like an invented slander.

²² One of the younger sons of the First Emperor, who was later illegally made Emperor through Chao Kao's machinations.

²³ Here and in the beginning of this paragraph the term "King of Ch'in" is an anachronism, as in 221 B. C., when the feudal states were unified, the King abandoned this title and assumed that of First Sovereign Emperor of Ch'in, by which he is generally known.

²⁴ In Mongolia, in the territory of the Oirat 烏陳特 Mongols, north of the great northern loop of the Yellow river.

²⁵ The place which was called Kan-ch'üan during the Han dynasty was different from the Kan-ch'üan which existed during the Ch'in dynasty. In the present instance, it is probably the Kan-ch'üan of the Han dynasty which is referred to, because it is associated with the city of Yün-yang, which occupied practically the same place. See next note. The Kan-ch'üan of the Han was located northwest of the present Shun-hua 淳化 hsien in Shensi, whereas that of the Ch'in was farther south, being south of the Wei river. I am indebted to Professor H. H. Dubs for pointing out the difference between the two places. In *China's First Unifier*, p. 46, note 2, I have mistakenly identified the Ch'in Kan-ch'üan with that of the Han.

²⁶ This road was made in 212 B. C., according to *Mém. hist.*, II, 174. There it is stated, however, that the road went from Chiu-yüan to Yün-yang 雲陽. But Kan-ch'üan is confirmed in the *Shih Chi*'s chronological table in ch. 15. Actually the two places were almost synonymous in the Han dynasty, which is probably the reason for the confusion.

the mountains and filled in the valleys, over a distance of one thousand eight hundred *li*.

The road was not yet completed when the First Emperor, in the winter of his thirty-seventh year (210 B. C.), went forth on a tour to K'uai-chi,²⁷ and then proceeded north along the sea to Lang-ya.²⁸ On the road he fell ill, and sent Meng I back to pray to the mountains and streams.²⁹ He had not yet returned when the First Emperor, after arriving at Sha-ch'iu, died.³⁰ The fact was kept hidden, so that none of the ministers knew about it.

At this time the Grand Councillor, Li Ssü,³¹ the younger son, Hu-hai, and the Keeper of the Chariots, Chao Kao, were in constant attendance. 1b (Chao) Kao often had obtained favors from Hu-hai, and he wished to establish him (as Emperor). Moreover he hated Meng I for having tried him according to the law, and not having let him off. For this reason he bore him a fierce hatred. So he secretly plotted with the Grand Councillor, Li Ssü, and the younger son, Hu-hai, to make Hu-hai the Crown Prince.

When the (new) Crown Prince (i. e., Hu-hai) had been established, he sent an emissary to confer death on Prince Fu-su and on Meng T'ien.³² After Fu-su was dead, Meng T'ien remained suspicious and sent back a second inquiry concerning the matter.³³ But the emissary

²⁷ Region named after a mountain of the same name in the southeast of Shao-hsing 紹興 hsien in Chekiang. Professor H. H. Dubs, in a letter, has informed me that Kuei-chi, which is the usual pronunciation of this place as given by Chavannes in *Mém. hist.*, by myself in *China's First Unifier*, and by other writers, is incorrect, and that the name should be read K'uai-chi.

²⁸ On the south coast of Shantung, not far from where the Shantung peninsula joins the mainland.

²⁹ In ancient China these were believed to have animating spirits, and were often sacrificed to. No doubt the First Emperor hoped in this way to prolong his life, for he was extremely superstitious and spent much of his time searching for the elixir of immortality. See *China's First Unifier*, ch. 5, pt. 1.

³⁰ Sha-ch'iu was northeast of the present P'ing-hsiang 平鄉 hsien in Hopei.

³¹ The most notable statesman of the time, whose life and achievements are described in detail in *China's First Unifier*.

³² Fu-su was the eldest son of the First Emperor, and the proper Crown Prince, but he had fallen into disfavor and was sent into semi-exile to work with Meng T'ien. See *China's First Unifier*, p. 118.

³³ The whole story of the plot which put Hu-hai on the throne after the First Emperor's death will be found told in much greater detail in Li Ssü's biography (*China's First Unifier*, pp. 25-34). There it is said that the plotters sent to Fu-su and Meng T'ien a false letter, purporting to be written by the First Emperor, in which their death was demanded. Fu-su complied by committing suicide, but Meng T'ien, more cautious, urged that a letter should be written back, seeking confirmation of the death order.

replaced the attendants attached to Meng T'ien by a bodyguard composed of Li Ssü's retainers.⁸⁴

When the emissary returned to report, Hu-hai, on hearing of Fu-su's death, wished to liberate Meng T'ien. But Chao Kao feared that the Meng family would return to prominence and be active in affairs, and he hated them. So when (Meng) I returned, Chao Kao took the occasion to present a "patriotic" plan to Hu-hai,⁸⁵ wishing in this way to exterminate the Meng family. He said to him:

"Your servant has heard that the former Emperor for a long time wished to select someone who would be worthy and make him Crown Prince. But (Meng) I remonstrated with him, saying: 'This will not do. For if you know that he is worthy, yet still do not establish him, he will not be loyal and will doubt his sovereign.'⁸⁶ Now according to the stupid idea of your servant, the best thing would be to execute him (i. e., Meng I)."

Hu-hai agreed and had Meng I put under arrest at Tai.⁸⁷ Before this time, he had already had Meng T'ien imprisoned at Yang-chou.⁸⁸ When the funeral cortege had arrived at Hsien-yang, and after the burial had taken place, the Crown Prince (i. e., Hu-hai) was established as Sovereign Emperor of the Second Generation.⁸⁹ (After this) Chao Kao, being on terms of close intimacy with him, day and night cast slanders on the Meng family, and sought out crimes of theirs for which he could prosecute them.

Tzū-ying⁴⁰ came forward and remonstrated, saying: "Your servant has heard that, of old, King Ch'ien of Chao killed his virtuous minister, Li Mu, and employed Yen Chü.⁴¹ King Hsi of Yen secretly used the

⁸⁴ I. e., had him arrested. The name of Hu-hai, which appears in the text before that of Li Ssü, seems to be a corruption and should be omitted.

⁸⁵ The use here of the word "patriotic" (*chung* 忠) is a sarcastic attack by Ssü-ma Ch'ien on Chao Kao.

⁸⁶ The meaning here is not very clear, and it is possible that the text is corrupt.

⁸⁷ Hu-hai did this while he was still on his way back to the Ch'in capital. For the location of Tai, see p. 35, note 71.

⁸⁸ A city in the north of the present An-ting 安定 hsien in Shansi.

⁸⁹ Erh-shih-huang-ti 二世皇帝.

⁴⁰ Grandson of the First Emperor, and who followed the Second Emperor as the last brief ruler of Ch'in, after which the Ch'in dynasty was overthrown by that of Han. In *China's First Unifier*, p. 54, note 1, I said by mistake that he was the First Emperor's nephew.

⁴¹ Li Mu was a Chao general who served under King Ch'ien (also known as King Yu-mu 幽穆). In the year 229, as a result of an intrigue engineered by Ch'in, King Ch'ien of Chao replaced Li Mu by a Ch'i general, Yen Chü, and had Li Mu executed. As a consequence, Chao was heavily defeated by Ch'in in the next year, and King Ch'ien was taken captive. See *Mém. hist.*, V, 129-130.

plots of Ching K'ò and broke his treaty with Ch'in.⁴² King Chien of Ch'i killed his loyal ministers of a former generation and followed the advice of Hou Sheng.⁴³ Each of these three rulers lost his state by changing the old order, and disaster overtook them.

"At present the Meng family are the great ministers and councillors of Ch'in, yet you, the sovereign, wish to throw them aside in a single morning. Your humble servant considers that this should not be done. I have heard that one who thinks in a light manner cannot rule a country, and that one who would hold all wisdom within himself cannot retain (his position) as ruler. To execute one's loyal ministers and set up men of unprincipled conduct, is to cause mutual distrust among the various ministers within (the court), and to create ideas of separatism among the warlike cavaliers without. Your humble servant considers that this should not be done."

Hu-hai did not listen, but sent the *yü-shih*,⁴⁴ Ch'ü Kung, to ride to Tai and command Meng I, saying: "The former sovereign wished to establish a Crown Prince, but you, sir, raised difficulties. Now the Grand Councillor,⁴⁵ holding that you have not been loyal, would incriminate your (whole) family. But We⁴⁶ are not hard hearted, and so We confer death on you (alone), which is indeed a deep favor. Consider it (carefully)!"

(Meng) I replied: "If I failed to understand the ideas of our former sovereign, it was because I was then young in office. But I enjoyed his favors to the end of his life, so that I may be said have known his ideas (later on). If I did not realize the Crown Prince's ability, it was because he was then by himself, and had travelled⁴⁷ widely over the empire, far removed from the other imperial princes. But I had no cause to suspect him, for the former sovereign's employment of the Crown Prince continued over several years. With what words would I have dared to remonstrate with him, or with what thoughts would I have dared to plot? I dare not utter (empty) phrases in order to avoid death. This

⁴² This refers to the events described in the preceding biography, which led to the destruction of the state of Yen. It was not King Hsi, however, but his son, the Crown Prince Tan, who was involved.

⁴³ In the year 221, King Chien, at the advice of his minister, Hou Sheng, surrendered his army to Ch'in without resistance. The result was that Ch'i was annexed by Ch'in, thus completing Ch'in's conquest of China, while King Chien was moved elsewhere. See *Mém. hist.*, V, 279.

⁴⁴ 御史, one of the highest officials, in charge of plans, reports, etc. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 514.

⁴⁵ Apparently Li Ssü, who held this position, the highest below the Emperor.

⁴⁶ 朕, the imperial We, for the message is sent from Hu-hai as Emperor.

⁴⁷ Taking 旋 as equivalent to 遊 (to travel).

would be to attach shame to the name of my former sovereign. I should like you to consider, sir, whether I have reason to be put to death. Moreover, the course of one who is obedient and thoroughgoing (in his work) is valued, but the course of one who punishes and kills is cut short.

"Of old, Duke Mu of Ch'in killed three worthies at the time of his death, and accused Po-li Hsi of a crime which was not his.⁴⁸ Therefore he was given the (posthumous) title of 'The False.'⁴⁹ King Chao-hsiang killed Po Ch'i, Lord of Wu-an.⁵⁰ King P'ing of Ch'u killed Wu She.⁵¹ Fu-ch'a, King of Wu, killed Wu Tzū-hsi.⁵² These four rulers all committed great wrongs, so that the world has execrated them, and because these rulers were unenlightened, (their acts) have been recorded among the feudal lords.⁵³ Therefore I say that he who governs according to principle does not kill those who are without sin, nor does he inflict punishment on the innocent. Do you, sir, keep this in mind."

But the emissary knew Hu-hai's intention, so he did not listen to Meng I's words, but executed him.

The (Emperor of) the Second Generation then dispatched another emissary to Yang-chou to command Meng T'ien, saying: "The faults

⁴⁸ These three worthies were among the 177 men who were put to death as a human sacrifice when Duke Mu died in 621. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 45. Po-li Hsi was Duke Mu's chief councillor, and had been ransomed by the latter from prison for five ram skins. The incident here referred to is uncertain, but it may be the disastrous defeat suffered by Ch'in in 627, which resulted from Duke Mu's refusal to follow Po-li Hsi's advice, and was followed by the Duke's admission that he himself was at fault. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 38-40.

⁴⁹ Mu 繆, a word which is sometimes used interchangeably with the word which usually forms the Duke's name, Mu 穆 (The Solemn). See *Mém. hist.*, IV, 89, note 2. It is very doubtful if the etymology given here of the first Mu is anything more than a clever invention, based on the historical fact that in ancient times the two words were at times used interchangeably.

⁵⁰ One of Ch'in's best generals, who in 257 committed suicide after an intrigue made against him by Fan Sui 范雎 and Marquis Ying 應侯. See *Mém. hist.*, II, 93, and his biography in the *Shih Chi*, ch. 73.

⁵¹ This was done in 523 at the advice of an intriguing official, because Wu She defended the Crown Prince, whose tutor he was, when the latter had fallen into disfavor with the King. See *Mém. hist.*, IV, 372.

⁵² The loyal minister of Fu-ch'a (495-473), who warned the latter against the pretended submission of the rival state of Yüeh. Fu-ch'a ignored the warning and angrily ordered Wu Tzū-hsi to commit suicide, but eleven years later, in 473, the warning came true, the state of Wu being annexed by Yüeh, and Fu-ch'a himself committing suicide.

⁵³ This is a reference to the *Ch'un Ch'iu* (Spring and Autumn Annals) and other histories of its type, in which all evil deeds are supposed to have been recorded without concealment for the special purpose of warning and instructing future generations.

of your lordship are many, and your younger brother, I, has committed a great crime. The law extends to the Prefect of the Capital."⁵⁴

(Meng) T'ien said: "From my forefathers down to their sons and grandsons merit and trust have been heaped up (by the Meng family) in Ch'in during three generations. I am now in command of more than three hundred thousand soldiers, and, even thought I myself am imprisoned, my power is sufficient to raise revolt. However, I am one who would preserve my uprightness, even though realizing that I must die. In order not to forget my former sovereign, I dare not shame the teachings of my forefathers.

2a "Of old, when King Ch'eng of Chou (1115-1079) first became king, he had not yet left his swaddling clothes. Tan, Duke of Chou,⁵⁵ carried the King to court, and eventually pacified the world. One time when King Ch'eng suffered illness and was in great danger, Tan, Duke (of Chou), cut off his fingernails and sank them in the (Yellow) river, saying: '(Now), while the King yet lacks knowledge, it is I who manage affairs. If there be calamity meted out for some crime, may I be the one to receive its misfortune.' He then wrote this down and stored it in the historical archives. He can indeed be called faithful.

"When the King was able to rule the country, there was an evil minister who said that Tan, Duke of Chou, had for a long time been wanting to foment rebellion, and that if the King did not prepare himself, there would surely be a great crisis. The King thereupon became greatly enraged, and Tan, Duke of Chou, fled to Ch'u. But King Ch'eng, (happening later on) to look into the historical archives, found there the record of what Tan, Duke of Chou, had thrown into the water. He then wept and said: 'Who says that Tan, Duke of Chou, wishes to foment rebellion?' He executed the speaker of these words and brought Tan, Duke of Chou, back.⁵⁶ Therefore the *Book of Chou* says: 'You must put them in threes and fives.'⁵⁷

⁵⁴ I. e., to Meng T'ien, who had been given this office by the First Emperor. See p. 53. This is a reference to the system of mutual responsibility which existed in Ch'in, according to which relatives of a man who had committed a crime could be punished with him under the same law. See *China's First Unifier*, pp. 166-167.

⁵⁵ Uncle of King Ch'eng and one of the founders of the Chou dynasty, who is ranked by the Confucianists among their sages.

⁵⁶ This story also appears in *Mém. hist.*, IV, 95-96. But it is given quite differently in the *Shu Ching* (Book of History), pt. 5, bk. 6 (Legge's translation in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 3, pp. 152-153). There, no mention is made of the sacrifice to the Yellow river, but it is said that the Duke prayed to his ancestors at three altars, after which he wrote this prayer on a tablet.

⁵⁷ 必參而伍之. This quotation is puzzling. The *Book of Chou* (*Chou Shu* 周書) is ordinarily that part of the *Shu Ching* which contains documents per-

"Now for generations my family has not been double minded, and yet its affairs end like this. This must be the action of an evil-doing minister, who is creating rebellion and internal tyranny. When King Ch'eng erred, he retrieved (his fault), and so in the end there was prosperity. But Chieh killed Kuan Lung-feng,⁸⁸ and Chou killed the King's son, Pi Kan,⁸⁹ without repenting, so that they themselves met death and their country was destroyed. Therefore I say: 'A fault may be repaired, and the admonitions (of an honest minister) can be recognized.' The way of the ancient sages was to pay careful attention to their 'threes' and 'fives.'

"I have not been saying all this to escape blame. I (know that I) shall die for my remonstrances, but I should like His Majesty to follow a course of conduct in which he would have some thought for his people."

The emissary said: "I have received the imperial command to apply the law to you, General, and I do not dare to report your words to the Emperor."

Meng T'ien heaved a great sigh and said: "What crime have I before Heaven? I die without fault!" After a long time he added: "Indeed I have a crime for which to die. Beginning at Lin-t'ao, and extending to Liao-tung, I have made ramparts and ditches over more than ten thousand *li*, and in this distance it is impossible that I have not cut through the veins of the earth. This is my crime."

He then swallowed poison and so committed suicide.

The Great Astrologer Duke says:

"I have gone to the northern borders and returned along Chih-tao.⁹⁰ As I travelled, I saw the Great Wall which Meng T'ien built for Ch'in, with its protective bastions. He cut through the mountains and filled in

taining to the Chou dynasty, but the quotation does not exist in the present version of this work. Perhaps the *Chou Shu* here intended is really the *Chou Li* (Rites of Chou), which in its second chapter (Biot's translation, I, 35) has the statement: "He (i. e., the ruler) creates their three (High Dignitaries) and puts into office their five (Prefects)." If this is really the sentence here referred to, then the saying: "You must put them in threes and fives," apparently means that the ruler must be careful whom he chooses to be his three High Dignitaries and his five Prefects; i. e., whom he makes his officials. But this is admittedly an uncertain explanation.

⁸⁸ A worthy who often reprimanded Chieh, the tyrannical last ruler of the Hsia dynasty, until the latter, losing patience, put him to death.

⁸⁹ Chou (1154?-1123?), infamous last ruler of the Shang dynasty, according to tradition cut open the heart of his kinsman, Pi Kan, to discover, as he said, whether a sage's heart has seven orifices.

⁹⁰ Name of the road which was made by Meng T'ien in 212 B. C. between Chiu-yüan and Kan-ch'üan, as described on p. 55.

the valleys, opening Chih-tao. He certainly had little regard for the strength of the people.

"When Ch'in first destroyed the feudal lords, the minds of (the people in) the empire were not settled and their wounds were not yet healed. (Meng) T'ien was a noted general, but he did not make powerful remonstrances (to the Emperor) at this time, nor did he alleviate the distress of the common people, support the aged, care for the orphaned, or busy himself with restoring harmony among the masses. (On the contrary) he gave in to the ideas (of the Emperor) and conscripted (forced) labor. Is it not fitting that he and his younger brother should meet death for this? What did his crime have to do with the veins of the earth?"

DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT

Of the three biographies which have been translated, this is by far the most conventional. At the same time it is the one which gives us the least new information about the events of the period. Its opening paragraphs, dealing with Meng T'ien's forefathers, derive their statements entirely from facts recorded in the fifth and sixth chapters of the *Shih Chi*.¹ Of the remainder, a considerable portion is devoted to the lengthy speeches made by Meng T'ien and his brother, Meng I, with the result that the highly important events which led to the downfall of the two brothers, and which center in the plot of Chao Kao, Li Ssü and Hu-hai, are narrated so sketchily that we must turn elsewhere, particularly to the biography of Li Ssü, if we are to understand them clearly.

The conventional character of the biography is nowhere more apparent than in these same speeches of Meng T'ien and Meng I, together with that of Tzū-ying protesting to Hu-hai against the latter's conduct. It is interesting, incidentally, to note that Tzū-ying's speech is typically Confucian in tone, and that Tzū-ying, despite the fact that he belonged to the House of Ch'in so hated by the Confucianists, is represented as a virtuous person. The same significant fact is true in the case of the portrayal of the unfortunate elder son of the First Emperor, Fu-su.² No doubt the real reason for this favorable treatment is that neither Tzū-ying nor Fu-su ever held much power in Ch'in, and that both suffered violent deaths, which by the Confucianists of the Han dynasty were considered to be the unjust result of the evil rule of their Ch'in predecessors.

What most gives the above mentioned three speeches their conven-

¹ See p. 53, notes 2, 3, 5-8, 10.

² See *China's First Unifier*, pp. 33, 118.

cional character is the repeated appearance in them of what I have elsewhere designated as "the argument by historical precedent," and which has been defined by me as "the use of historical persons or incidents as illustrations for the immediate point to be proved."³ Concerning the appearance of such persons in historical illustrations, I have also written that "it would almost seem as if in the late Chou dynasty and early Han dynasty texts, whenever an official was unjustly imprisoned, it was the usual literary fashion for the writer describing the event to represent the victim as comparing himself with at least one of these . . . heroes."⁴

Precisely the same is true in the case of the three speeches here. The speech of Tzū-ying contains three examples of historical precedent (those of Kings Ch'ien of Chao, Hsi of Yen and Chien of Ch'i); that of Meng I contains four examples (Duke Mu of Ch'in and Kings Chao-hsiang of Ch'in, P'ing of Ch'u and Fu-ch'a of Wu); while that of Meng T'ien contains three examples (Chieh, Chou and King Ch'eng of Chou).

This exaggerated use of historical precedent gives to all these speeches a formal, unrealistic, stylized appearance, which is not uncommon in many writings of this period, and which strongly suggests the idea that such speeches are nothing but literary embroideries which have been added to the main historical narrative both for dramatic effect and to express the ethical ideas of their composer. Only in this way, indeed, can one explain how lengthy speeches of this sort, often delivered under circumstances when they could not possibly have been recorded or even known, appear so frequently in historical writings of the time.

In the case of the Meng T'ien biography, however, there is still another piece of evidence which is quite conclusive on this point. This is the striking similarity which exists between the account of the death of Meng T'ien, as found in his biography, and that of the death of another Ch'in general, Po Ch'i 白起, in the latter's biography.⁵

Po Ch'i is notorious in history as the man who, after defeating the army of Chao in a great battle at Ch'ang-p'ing in the year 260, ruthlessly executed 400,000 Chao soldiers who had surrendered to him on a promise of safety.⁶ Three years later, in 257, he himself became the victim of a court intrigue and committed suicide.

The accounts of the deaths of the two men are as follows:

Biography of Meng T'ien: "Meng T'ien heaved a great sign and said: 'What crime have I before Heaven? I die without fault!' After a long time he added: 'Indeed I have a crime for which to die. Beginning at Lin-t'ao, and extending to Liao-tung, I have made ramparts and

³ *China's First Unifier*, p. 223.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁵ *Shih Chi*, ch. 73, p. 2a.

⁶ See *Mém. Hist.*, II, 91.

ditches over more than ten thousand *li*, and in this distance it is impossible that I have not cut through the veins of the earth. This is my crime.' He then swallowed poison and so committed suicide."

Biography of Po Ch'í: "He said: 'What crime have I before Heaven, that I have come to this?' After a long time he added: 'I must certainly die. At the battle of Ch'ang-p'ing there were several hundred thousand Chao soldiers who surrendered to me, and by a trick I had them all buried alive. This is sufficient cause for me to die.' And thereupon he committed suicide."

The similarity (even more striking in the Chinese original) between the accounts of the deaths of these two men, both of them prominent Ch'in military generals, is more than mere accident. Together with the facts pointed out above, it is sufficient to prove that at least one and perhaps both accounts, are nothing but literary inventions.

In this connection the statement attributed to Meng T'ien that his death came about because he had "cut through the veins of the earth," is an extremely interesting one. Ssü-ma Ch'ien, following the Confucian line of moral argument so characteristic of him, rejects this explanation entirely in his general summary at the end of the biography. The real reason, he holds, why Meng T'ien came to his death, is because he conscripted forced labor and did nothing to "alleviate the distress of the common people, support the aged, care for the orphaned, or busy himself with restoring harmony among the masses"; a sentence which well illustrates the humanitarian interest in social problems which is such a dominant feature of the Confucian school. And Ssü-ma Ch'ien concludes by saying: "Is it not fitting that he and his younger brother should meet death for this? What did his crime have to do with the veins of the earth?"

Now this is a highly significant statement on Ssü-ma Ch'ien's part, because it indicates that this biography of Meng T'ien could not have been original with him, but must have been based on some earlier sources, now lost, in which these words about the cutting of the veins of the earth were already attributed to Meng T'ien. For Ssü-ma Ch'ien was too honest an historian to have refuted such a statement, if he did not sincerely believe that it, or at least words to its effect, went back to Meng T'ien himself.

The same statement is interesting from another point of view, because it is one of the earliest allusions in Chinese literature to the Chinese "science" of geomancy, in later times known as *feng-shui* 風水, or "wind and water." Until modern times in China, no important building, tomb, or other structure, could be constructed before a careful study had been made of the "wind and water" supernatural influences which

were inherent in its geographical situation, and which would render its erection either propitious or inauspicious. Thus one reason why the building of railroads in China went on so slowly during the nineteenth century, was the belief of the populace that the making of railroad cuts, etc., would disturb the local *feng-shui*. Exactly the same fear is apparent in Meng T'ien's supposed statement that by his construction of the Great Wall, he had cut the veins of the earth and so had brought disaster on himself.

Another passage in early Chinese literature which alludes to *feng-shui* is one dealing with books on divination, to be found in the catalogue of the Han imperial library contained in the thirtieth chapter of the *Ch'ien Han Shu* (History of the Former Han Dynasty). In this chapter, which was compiled by Pan Ku (A. D. 32-92) from materials collected by Liu Hsiang (79-8 B. C.) and his son, Liu Hsin (c. 53 B. C.-A. D. 23), the later "science" of *feng-shui* is described under the designation of the "system of forms" (*hsing fa* 形法): "The system of forms deals with general statements about the influencing forces in the entire nine provinces, in order to erect a walled city, its outer wall, a house or a hut." A number of works are listed under this section of the bibliography, including one with the suggestive title of *Forms of the Sites for Palaces and Houses*,⁸ a book in twenty *chüan*, which has unfortunately not come down to us.

Returning from this digression, let us now consider what the biography tells about Meng T'ien's building of the Great Wall. We know from other sources that this Great Wall was not original with Meng T'ien, but was a consolidation and enlargement of several Great Walls which had been built by various feudal states along their northern and western frontiers during the centuries immediately preceding the Ch'in dynasty. We also know that the Great Wall which we see to-day is in most places not the same as that of Meng T'ien.⁹

The biography seems to contradict the sixth chapter of the *Shih Chi* in one respect when it states (p. 54): "After Ch'in had unified the world (in 221), Meng T'ien was sent to command a host of three hundred thousand to drive out the Jung and Ti along the north. He took from them the territory to the south of the (Yellow) river, and built a Great Wall. . . . He camped his soldiers along the outer (borders) for more than ten years."

⁸ Quoted both in Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Bodde's translation, I, 28, and in J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China* (Leiden, 1897), III, 995. The latter work, though it gives a detailed account of the development of *feng-shui*, does not mention the very clear-cut case discussed above.

⁹ *Kung Chai T'ü Hsing* 宮宅地形.

⁹ See *China's First Unifier*, pp. 140, 180.

This statement is quite consistent in itself, as actually eleven years elapsed between the Ch'in unification of 221 and Meng T'ien's death in 210. The sixth chapter, however, records Meng T'ien's conquest of the territory south of the Yellow river under the single year of 215, and it mentions his building of the Great Wall only under the following year of 214.¹⁰

The contradiction, nevertheless, is more apparent than real. Meng T'ien's conquest of 215 was probably but one spectacular exploit in a long series of campaigns which continued for many years against the Tatar tribes. What has happened is that the writer of the biography, having in mind these campaigns, has simply neglected to differentiate them from the specific victory of 215. In the case of the Great Wall, also, it is impossible to believe that such a mighty structure could have been built in a single year, so that the biography is perfectly correct in not assigning it to any particular date. In this connection it should be noted that though the sixth chapter mentions Meng T'ien's building of the wall only under the year 214, it does not in any way state that its construction was limited to this single year. Indeed, work on the wall is also mentioned as being done in the year 213, indicating that the building of it must have continued during a considerable period.¹¹

The biography contains one or two other inconsistencies which are of no great importance. The two references to the ruler of Ch'in as "the King of Ch'in," which occur in a single paragraph on p. 55, are undoubtedly slips of the pen, as the title of First Emperor was assumed before the time described, in the year 221, and is correctly given in paragraphs both preceding and following this one.¹² Again, according to the biography, Meng T'ien died only after Meng I, whereas according to the biography of Li Ssü, these two deaths occurred in the reverse order. But on this point the biography of Meng T'ien is probably correct, because the passage in Li Ssü's biography where the conflicting statement occurs is in all likelihood unreliable.¹³

One last point which should be stressed is the fact that nowhere in Meng T'ien's biography is there any reference to him as having invented the Chinese writing brush, which has played such a vital part in Chinese calligraphy. The tradition ascribing its invention to Meng T'ien has become so generally accepted that at the present time he occupies a place in China as the semi-deified patron of Chinese brush sellers.¹⁴ Yet it is really a tradition of comparatively late origin. Thus the great thesaurus

¹⁰ *Mém. hist.*, II, 167-169.

¹² See p. 55, note 23.

¹¹ *Mém. hist.*, II, 169.

¹³ See *China's First Unifier*, pp. 95-97.

¹⁴ See P. Henri Doré, *Recherches sur les superstitions en Chine*, vol. 12 (Shanghai, 1918), p. 1086, and the picture of Meng T'ien facing that page.

on Chinese literary quotations, the *P'ei Wen Yün Fu*,¹⁵ gives the *Po Wu Chih*, by Chang Hua (A. D. 232-300),¹⁶ as the earliest work in which this tradition occurs. There it is stated that "Meng T'ien created the writing brush"; yet even this somewhat late source is denied by another work, the *Ch'u Hsueh Chi*, which was written by Hsü Chien (659-729) and others.¹⁷ The latter work, according to the *P'ei Wen Yün Fu*,¹⁸ states quite clearly that "before Ch'in, the writing brush already existed; yet Ch'in alone has gained the reputation of (first having it), and of Meng T'ien, moreover, as having invented it. This (latter belief) is a still greater error."

Modern archaeological research has abundantly confirmed such a conclusion, and has shown beyond much doubt that the writing brush was already in existence as early as the Shang dynasty (1765?-1123? B. C.).¹⁹ A tradition, possibly a true one, does exist, however, to the effect that a new and improved type of writing brush, using a different kind of hair, actually made its appearance during the Ch'in dynasty.²⁰ If this tradition is correct, it is probably the basis for the other tradition according to which the actual invention of the writing brush is attributed to Meng T'ien himself.

In this case, the appearance of this improved type of writing brush during the Ch'in dynasty, together with the invention of paper (traditionally in the year A. D. 105, but the beginnings of which are probably considerably earlier), would explain the new flowing calligraphic forms of Chinese characters which became current during the Han dynasty, and have lasted till to-day. At the same time it seems probable that this calligraphic development may have been aided by Li Ssü's standardization and simplification of the earlier, more ornate script.²¹ The political unification that took place under the Ch'in and Han dynasties may also conceivably have played a part in causing the use of the writing brush to become more widespread. The whole subject, however, is an uncertain one, and one on which we need a great deal of further investigation.

¹⁵ See *chilan* 29, under Meng T'ien.

¹⁶ 博物志, by 張華.

¹⁷ 初學記, by 徐堅.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ See H. G. Creel, *Studies in Early Chinese Culture* (Baltimore, 1937), pp. 42-46.

²⁰ See Lucy Driscoll and Kenji Toda, *Chinese Calligraphy* (Chicago, 1935), pp. 17-19.

²¹ See *China's First Unifier*, ch. 8, especially pp. 154-156.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusions which we have reached through our discussions of the three *Shih Chi* biographies are very briefly as follows:

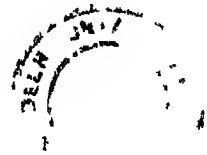
(1) The biography of Lü Pu-wei, which differs widely from the corresponding account in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*, contains a great many inconsistencies which show it to be unreliable. Though Ssü-ma Ch'ien's general summary at the end seems to represent at least some of his actual words, the remainder of the biography has evidently undergone great alteration by a later hand. Its story of Lu Pu-wei being the natural father of the First Emperor of Ch'in is definitely untrustworthy, and has probably been introduced by some unknown Confucian of the Han dynasty in order to heap slander on the First Emperor.

(2) The biography of Ching K'ô, on the other hand, is proved to be authentic not only by its agreement with the version in the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*, but by the statement made in the historian's summary at the end of the biography, in which he says that he has actually talked with persons who knew an eyewitness of Ching K'ô's assassination attempt. The same statement proves further that this biography could not have been written by Ssü-ma Ch'ien himself, but only by his father, Ssü-ma T'an. At the same time the speeches found in this biography contain evidence proving that they, as well as most such speeches which occur in the *Shih Chi* biographies, cannot be authentic in themselves, but have simply been added as literary embroideries to fill out the basic historical facts.

(3) The biography of Meng T'ien which is the most conventional of the three biographies, is also the one that yields us the least new information. A considerable part of it is devoted to three speeches which are filled with the use of argument by historical precedent, and which certainly cannot go back, at least in their present flowery form, to their supposed speakers. The biography as a whole, however, must have been based on sources already existing before Ssü-ma Ch'ien's time, as is indicated by a certain comment which he makes in his general summary at the end.

Much of the long, detailed analysis which has been necessary to come to the above conclusions is, no doubt, as tedious for the reader as it has been difficult for the writer. Nevertheless, it is of importance, not only in order to evaluate the worth and reliability of these three biographies themselves, but in order to come to an understanding of the methods and general principles that have been employed in the compilation of the

Shih Chi. Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien and his father, Ssŭ-ma T'an, remain even to-day among the world's great historians, and their *Shih Chi* is one of the most valuable sources for our knowledge of ancient China. Therefore it is highly necessary that such studies as have been made here, should be continued, in order that we may better know the extent to which we may rely on this great history.



A NOTE ON KARLGREN'S GRAMMATICAL METHOD FOR THE ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHINESE TEXTS

Since the publication in 1926 of Professor Karlgren's very important article, "On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan," considerable acceptance has been given to his method for the dating of early Chinese texts through a detailed analysis of their usage of certain pronouns and grammatical particles. The same method was used by me in the fourth chapter of *China's First Unifier*, in which a critical analysis was made of the biography of Li Ssü in the *Shih Chi*.

In the Li Ssü analysis I attempted to determine which of the various throne memorials, speeches, etc., that are recorded in that biography, might actually date back to Li Ssü's own time, and which of them were probably created at a later time by Ssü-ma Ch'ien or some other writer of the Han dynasty. It was encouraging to find that the results obtained through Karlgren's method harmonized rather closely with other independent criteria which were presented.

Since that time, however, certain facts have appeared which cause me to hesitate to use this method in the analysis of further *Shih Chi* material. One of the most important of these facts concerns the Chinese first personal pronoun, *wu* 吾. Professor Karlgren, in his discussion of this word on pp. 49-50 of his article, states that "in both Lu and Tso dialects, *wu* is limited to the nominative and genitive cases (I, my, we, our)," and that it is "never used as object (direct or indirect or following a preposition)." In accordance with this principle, I pointed out in my study on Li Ssü's biography¹ that there was one phrase in the biography in which the word *wu* actually did occur in the *accusative* case. The phrase in question was, "but he would not listen to me" 不吾聽也. I remarked on this that "such a mistake would in English be equivalent to saying, 'He would not listen to I,'" and finally, on p. 100, I drew the conclusion that "the curious use of *wu* . . . in the accusative, makes it very probable that this part of the biography cannot date back to Li Ssü's own time, but has been invented by Ssü-ma Ch'ien for literary effect."

This conclusion was one which was well supported by other evidence, quite independent of the use of *wu* itself. Nevertheless, it was something of a surprise when Dr. Chang Yü-ch'üan 張燧全, of Peiping,²

¹ *China's First Unifier*, p. 98.

² Whose review of *China's First Unifier* appeared in the *Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, April-June, 1938, pp. 92-101.

wrote me a letter drawing attention to the fact that in the *Lun Yü* (which belongs to the Lu dialect), there are three very similar occurrences of *wu* in the accusative case. The passages are the following:

Lun Yü, XI, 25: "Do not consider me (*wu*) so. Living in private life, you are saying: 'They do not know me (*wu*).'"³

Lun Yü, XIII, 14: "Although they did not make use of me (*wu*), yet I should have been consulted about them."⁴

Following the receipt of this information, I consulted Karlǵren's earlier article, "Le proto-chinois—langue flexionelle," in which he has laid down some of his principles for grammatical analysis. I then discovered that he had already cited these *Lun Yü* passages there, but that he explained them as cases of "assimilation," in which *wu*, being placed before the verb, that is to say, in the usual position of the nominative, may act in a nominative as well as a purely accusative function.⁵

It is not necessary to discuss here whether this explanation of Karlǵren is correct or not. In any case, the fact remains that this exceptional use of *wu* occurs not only in the *Lun Yü*, in passages that are generally considered to be early and authentic, but also in the *Shih Chi*'s biography of Li Ssü, and probably in other texts as well where it has not yet been remarked on. Exceptions of such a kind, even though rare, make one seriously hesitate to apply the grammatical method of textual criticism with too great assuredness. In the analysis of such long texts as the *Tso Chuan*, for which this method has been particularly used by Karlǵren, there is little danger, to be sure, that a few sporadic exceptions of this kind will change very markedly the conclusions that are reached. But in shorter texts, such as the majority of the *Shih Chi* biographies, the occurrence of even a single exception, if it is accepted without due critical reserve, may seriously influence one's final judgment.

This is particularly the case in the three biographies that have been translated in this volume, each one of which is a great deal shorter than the Li Ssü biography, and in even the longest of which, that of Ching K'ö, the pronoun *wu*, to take but one example, occurs only seven times. It would be dangerous to draw very definite conclusions from such a small number of occurrences; but, as a matter of fact, a grammatical analysis which I have made of these three biographies, merely for my own satisfaction, has failed to yield any very conclusive results one way or the other.

³ 毋吾以也。居則曰，不吾知也。

⁴ 雖不吾以，吾其與聞之。

⁵ See *Journal asiatique*, 1920, pp. 209-210.

Still another factor to be kept in mind, when considering such a text as the *Shih Chi*, is the always existent possibility that grammatical peculiarities which may be characteristic in, let us say, Chinese documents of the third century B. C., may later have been altered or even obliterated by Ssü-ma Ch'ien when he combined these documents to form a single biography or chapter; notwithstanding that at the same time he may have faithfully kept to the original meaning, and even, for the most part, to the original phraseology.

For all these reasons, therefore, while fully recognizing the value of Karlgren's method of grammatical analysis under other circumstances, I have not used it in the discussion of the biographies translated in this book, but have based my conclusions upon other criteria.

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